ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

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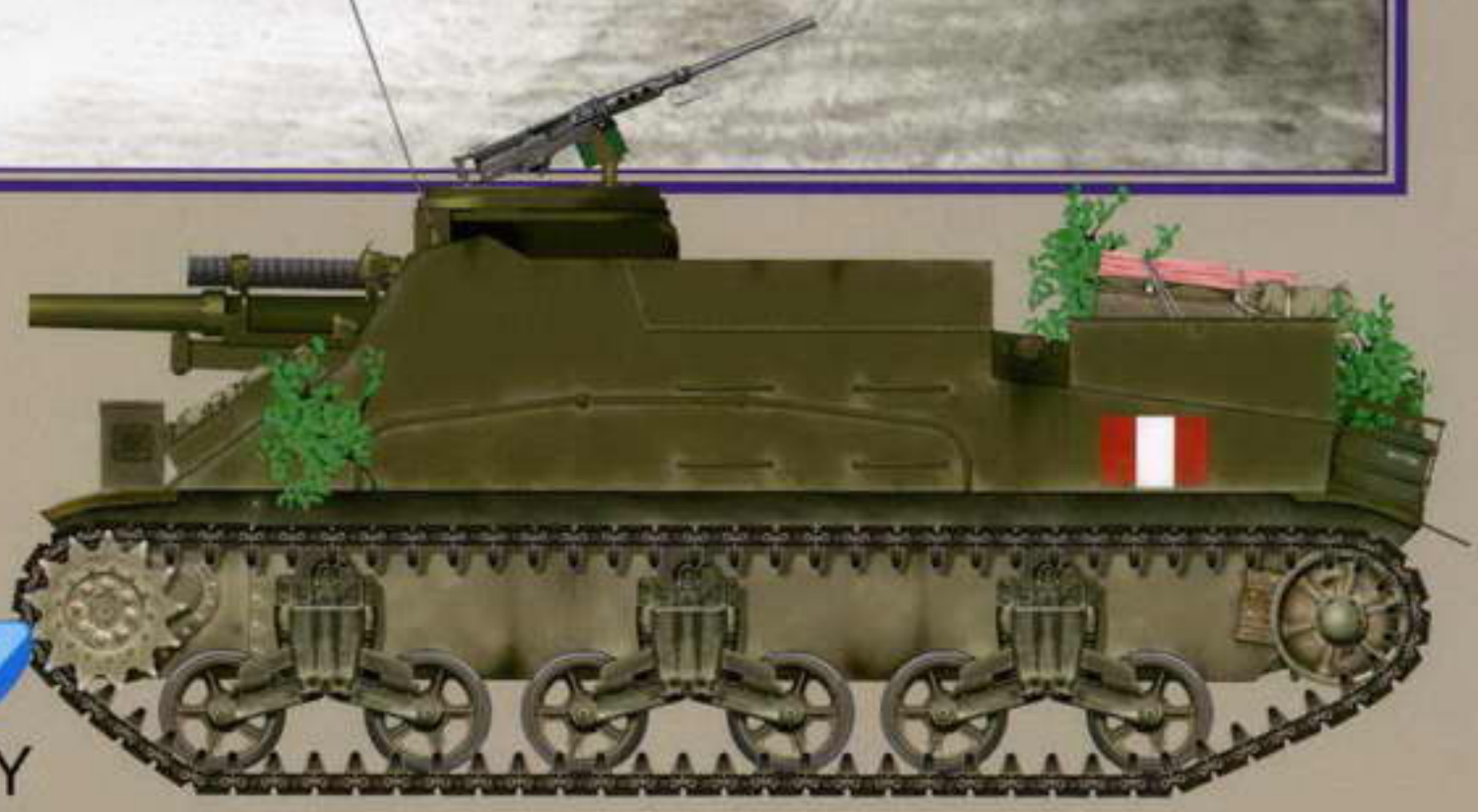
British Armor
in Sicily and Italy

Dennis Oliver



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INTRODUCTION

The role played by armored units during the Invasion of Sicily and the subsequent campaign on the Italian mainland is often overlooked. The grand, sweeping maneuvers which had been a feature of the war in North Africa were replaced by conditions at times reminiscent of the 1914-8 War and from June 1944 were overshadowed by the battles being fought in Northern Europe which tended to steal the headlines. Yet every British armored vehicle of the period, with the exception of the Cromwell*, was used in Italy. The peculiar conditions of the Italian countryside necessitated the development of specialist vehicles that were not used in any other theater. Tanks such as the Churchill NA 75, the Sherman IIA, mounting the 76mm gun, and the Sherman IB, armed with a 105mm Howitzer, were only operated in British service by units fighting their way up the Peninsula.

**At least four Cromwells were received for trials but none were used operationally.*

A chronicle of the Italian Campaign would not be appropriate here, nor indeed useful as it has been covered in detail by many, much more competent authors. Instead I have tried to give a brief history of the units involved and some idea of the equipment they used.

The reader should note that when regiments or battalions are first mentioned I have endeavored to use their full and correct titles as they were during the 1939-45 period. Subsequently they are referred to by generally accepted abbreviations. Further, although I have used the terms Firefly, Wolverine and Achilles to describe respectively the 17pdr armed Sherman, M10 Tank Destroyer and the M10 17pdr Self-propelled Anti-tank Gun, it is far from certain that these names were officially adopted during the war and are used here as a matter of convenience only.

Units of the Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) attached to Armoured Divisions

Formed in April 1939 the RAC comprised the mechanized cavalry regiments, the battalions of the Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) and the Yeomanry. Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities a number of infantry battalions were converted to armored units for the duration of the war. These and the last of the cavalry regiments to give up their horses also now came under the direction of the RAC. As such the role of the personnel of the RAC was administrative and should not be confused with that of the fighting units. Those units styled "Regiment, RAC" were in fact converted infantry battalions of the Territorial Army and retained their titles and seniority.

1st Armoured Division

The armored component of this division was made up of 2nd Armoured Brigade consisting of The Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards), the 9th Lancers and 10th Hussars (Prince of Wales Own). The divisional reconnaissance regiment was the 4th Queen's Own Hussars.

This division had been in training since the fall of Tunis in May 1943 when it was committed to the first attack on the Gothic Line, in August 1944. In an attempt to force the German positions on the Corriano Ridge the Bays lost 24 tanks and 98 men killed or wounded in a single action during the afternoon of 19 September. The brigade's total losses for that day were 55 tanks out of their compliment of 141. Nevertheless on 23 September the division was able to report that 33 Sherman II, 45 Sherman III, 75 Sherman V, 28 Sherman IIA and 17 Sherman IB, a total of 198 tanks, were on hand.

On 28 October, after further heavy fighting, the division was broken up, 4th Hussars going to 9th Armoured Brigade with the other armored regiments being used to form an Independent Brigade Group.

6th Armoured Division

After suffering particularly heavy casualties during the final stages of the North African campaign the division was not committed to Italy until May 1944. The senior armored regiment, 16th/5th Lancers, had however been replacing the regiments of 23rd Armoured Brigade which since January were rotated to Egypt to rest and refit.

The division's armored brigade, the 26th, was made up of 16th/5th Lancers, 17th/21st Lancers and 2nd Lothians and Border Horse. The reconnaissance regiment was the 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry.

Seeing their first action in May at the crossing of the Rapido River, just below Monte Cassino, the division had reached the Tiber by June and led the advance on Perugia. In July the division took part in the assault on Arezzo and in August came briefly under the control of (US) 1st Army. At this time the brigade was mostly equipped with Sherman IIIs, having 215 on hand at the end of September. Newer, more powerful tanks were beginning to arrive albeit in small numbers - just two of the 76mm armed Sherman IIA and nine Sherman IB howitzers were available.

The winter of 1944/45 saw many of the tank crews dismounted and serving as infantry in the Appenine Mountains. During the closing stages of the war, and back in their tanks, the division captured Argenta cutting off the elite German I Parachute Corps in the process. In early April 1945 the division had on hand 5 Sherman II, 60 Sherman III, 112 Sherman IIA, 27 Firefly IC and 17 Sherman IB. The 76mm and 17pdr armed tanks were by then, as with most tank units, the most numerous.

7th Armoured Division

Probably the most famous division in the British Army, the first elements of the "Desert Rats" landed at Salerno on the afternoon of 15 September 1943. Commanded by Major General "Bobby" Erskine the division's armored component was made up of 22nd Armoured Brigade which contained 1st Royal Tank Regiment, 5th Royal Tank Regiment and 4th County of London Yeomanry. The reconnaissance regiment was the 11th Hussars (Prince Albert's Own).

During its service in Italy the division was almost exclusively equipped with Sherman III tanks, the 2 October 1943 Situation Report showing 157 on hand with 5 Grants, which were presumably used in a command tank role. Photographic and anecdotal evidence would also suggest that a number of turretless M3 Stuarts, referred to as Honeys by their British crews, were also retained from North Africa. The 11th Hussars operated Daimler armored cars, White Scout Cars and a number of 75mm equipped M3 Gun Motor Carriage (GMC) Halftracks, two of which they received prior to leaving North Africa.

In November the division left Italy to train for the Normandy landings handing over all their tanks and other armored vehicles to the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. It is recorded that the Canadians were less than pleased with their new charges, some of which had been taken over from 4th Indian Division as far back as February 1943. Interestingly the 11th Hussars retained their 75mm Halftracks and used them in North-west Europe until January 1945 by which time their barrels were worn out.

Units of the RAC attached to Armoured Brigades

2nd Armoured Brigade

When 1st Armoured Division was disbanded in late 1944, 2nd Armoured Brigade became an independent formation available to assist any division at the direction of 8th Army HQ. The brigade's new role was reflected in its equipment, for although the 75mm Shermans were retained and newer, more powerful models were received - including the Sherman IIA and 17pdr armed tanks - there were also on hand Shermans converted to carry out specialist roles more often associated with the Engineers.

As early as the summer of 1944 8th Army was experiencing a severe shortage of bridging equipment – essential in the difficult Italian countryside. In November 1944, at the direction of the Commander of Engineers of V Corps, 2nd Armoured Brigade's Light Aid Detachment and RE workshops began work on three distinct types. The first was based on the Sherman V and know as the Sherman ARK. These were derived from an earlier design known as the Octopus and were intended to operate similarly to the Churchill ARK. The second, the Sherman Fascine Carrier, was based on the Sherman II hull. In this vehicle the turret was removed but the turret ring was retained and a framework, which held the fascines or bolsters, was attached. The whole, framework and fascines, could then be rotated to be launched over guide rails mounted on the hull front. An example of one of these vehicles is shown in the illustration section.

The third was known as the Sherman Cut-Down which in 2nd Armoured Brigade was based on the large hatch, late Sherman II hull. Its purpose was to carry the working parties which cooperated with the Fascine Carriers. This conversion should not be confused with the Sherman Kangaroo which it in fact preceded.

Although the crews of these vehicles received training and support from the RE and REME, they were drawn exclusively from the brigade's own establishment.

The ARK version was originally thought to hold great promise, particularly after its performance at the crossing of the Marzeno in November 1944. However trials carried out by the recently formed 1st Assault Regiment RAC/RE confirmed that as a platform for this type of vehicle the Sherman was inadequate and the design was abandoned.

In December the brigade went into reserve, handing over its bridging vehicles to 7th Armoured Brigade and 4th (NZ) Armoured Brigade. In anticipation of the Spring 1945 campaign the brigade converted four Sherman V models to ARKs - not the original design but rather an improved version where the ramps were carried flat on the hull deck. This vehicle was eventually named the Twaby ARK and an example can be seen in the photograph section.

On 7 April 1945, just one month before the German surrender, the tally of the brigade's armored vehicles amounted to 98 Sherman IIA, 35 Firefly IC, 28 Sherman IB Howitzers, 5 Sherman V 75mm tanks, the 4 ARKs mentioned above, 9 Fascine Carriers, 33 Stuart Recce conversions and 2 Valentine Bridgelayers.

4th Armoured Brigade

Formed in North Africa from the veteran 4th Light Armoured Brigade and trained for the Invasion of Sicily this formation was made up of 3rd County of London Yeomanry and 44th Royal Tank Regiment. In June 1943 the brigade, under the command of XIII Corps, supported 5th and 50th Infantry Divisions during the fighting in Sicily. For the invasion of Sicily, A Squadron, 1st Household Cavalry Regiment was attached in the reconnaissance role.

On 16 September 4th Armoured Brigade landed on the Italian mainland at Taranto and in the following months took part in the fighting at the Sangro River and later at the crossing of the Moro. During its service in Italy the brigade was equipped with Sherman III tanks, the 2 October 1943 Situation Report showing 99 on hand with 6 elderly Sherman IIs. The history published by the regimental association states that between August 1943 and January 1944 46th Royal Tank Regiment, 50th Royal Tank Regiment and 98th Field Artillery Regiment, RA (Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry) were also attached.

The brigade remained in Italy until January1944 when the Royal Scots Greys, who had been absent since late 1942, returned and the brigade left for England.

7th Armoured Brigade

The brigade arrived in Italy in May 1944 and at that time consisted of 7th Queen's Own Hussars, 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and 6th Royal Tank Regiment. The brigade took part in the fighting at the Gothic and Hitler Lines and in September were able to report 105 Sherman II and 56 Sherman V tanks on hand. In that same month the 7th Hussars left for 9th Armoured Brigade to be replaced by 8th Royal Tank Regiment. This establishment lasted until May 1945.

During their service with 7th Armoured Brigade the 7th Hussars had supported II Polish Corps and for their efforts had been granted the privilege of wearing the Maid of Warsaw badge.

During late 1944 the brigade converted a number of its gun tanks to fascine carriers by removing the turret and turret ring and welding a fixed framework on the hull. These vehicles could carry two fascines and a bolster on the rear hull. By early 1945, after a period training with DD tanks, the brigade was converting to Churchills although in April they still had 62 Shermans on hand including two of the fascine conversions. In 1945 the brigade fought at the crossing of the Senio River and at war's end was advancing on Vienna and Trieste.

9th Armoured Brigade

The brigade arrived in Italy from Syria in May 1944 and comprised 3rd The King's Own Hussars, the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry and the Warwickshire Yeomanry. In June the brigade was attached to 6th South African Armoured Division but in July the regiments were allocated to different formations as the need arose – the 3rd Hussars supporting 78th Infantry Division and the Wiltshire Yeomanry supplying squadrons to both 4th and 10th Indian Divisions.

In July 1944 the government instituted a scheme whereby soldiers who had been on continuous overseas service for over 5 years were to return to Britain. When the period was reduced to 4½ years in August the effect on a veteran formation such as 9th Armoured Brigade was terminal. Due mainly to the influence of one of its squadron commanders Major John Morrison, who was also the MP for Salisbury, the Wiltshire Yeomanry was allowed to return to Britain as a complete unit, thereby avoiding the risk of disbandment. The 3rd Hussars moved back to Syria.

In October 1944 4th Hussars, who had arrived in Italy as part of 1st Armoured Division, and 7th Hussars joined the brigade and remained part of the establishment until war's end. In preparation for the spring campaign 7th Hussars were equipped with Duplex Drive (DD) swimming tanks. These were originally Valentine IX and XI DDs, although by the time the regiment went into action all but four had been replaced by Sherman IIIs. The remaining Valentines had their turrets removed and were used as ammunition carriers.

21st Tank Brigade

The brigade arrived in Italy in May 1944 and consisted of 12th Royal Tank Regiment, 48th Royal Tank Regiment and 145th Regiment, RAC (Duke of Wellington's Regiment). In December 1944, 145th RAC was disbanded and the North Irish Horse joined the brigade. Although there has been some debate regarding the order of precedence of the brigade's regiments the North Irish Horse regimental history states that the official account of 21st Tank Brigade operations confirms the order as: North Irish Horse, 12th RTR and 48th RTR.

23rd Armoured Brigade

In July 1943, B Squadron, 46th Royal Tank Regiment and 50th Royal Tank Regiment, less the HQ Squadron, took part in the landings in Sicily. The brigades other units, 40th (King's) Royal Tank Regiment and A and C Squadrons of 46th RTR together with the Brigade HQ remained in Africa. In September 40th RTR landed at Salerno and for most of the brigade's Italian service the regiments would be allocated to other formations. At this time the brigade was almost exclusively equipped with Sherman III tanks with a solitary Grant. In January 1944 46th RTR was engaged at Anzio. The brigade was sent to Greece in December 1944.

25th Tank Brigade

The brigade arrived in Italy in April 1944 and by 22 May was engaged with 1st Canadian Division at the Hitler Line. At that time the brigade was made up of the North Irish Horse, 51st Royal Tank Regiment and 142nd Regiment, RAC (The Suffolk Regiment). From August to October the brigade was again supporting the Canadians this time at the Gothic Line. It was during this time that the brigade added a white maple-leaf to their "Diabolo" insignia.

In December the brigade was broken up with the North Irish Horse transferring to 21st Tank Brigade and 142nd RAC being disbanded. The remaining regiment, 51st RTR, formed the basis for a new formation 25th Armoured Engineer Brigade.

Special mention should also be made of several armored units which, although acting from time to time under the orders of other formations, effectively operated as independent regiments controlled at Corps or Army level.

1st Household Cavalry Regiment

Formed from the Household Cavalry Composite Regiment, itself made up of the Life Guards and The Royal Horse Guards the two most senior regiments of the British Army. The regiment's A Squadron participated in the Invasion of Sicily under the command of 4th Armoured Brigade. The rest of the regiment arrived in November 1943 as XIII Corps troops. The regiment returned to Britain in October 1944. This unit should not be confused with 1st Household Cavalry which served as the Armoured Car Regiment of VIII

Corps in North-west Europe.

1st King's Dragoon Guards
On 24 September 1943 four squadrons landed at Salerno as part of X Corps under the operational control of 23rd Armoured Brigade. The regiment fought on the Volturno, at Monte Camino, and the crossing of the Garigliano. During the advance up Italy during 1944, they took part in the capture of Perugia, Arezzo and Florence and fought at the Gothic Line. During late 1944 the regiment was part of two ad hoc formations Lindforce and later Porterforce. While in Italy the regiment, true to its roots, formed a mounted troop using locally acquired horses. The regiment left Italy in December 1944 and formed part of the force dispatched to Greece. They are known to have operated Daimler and Staghound armored cars, Dingo scout cars and a number of 75mm armed M3 halftracks.

The Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons)
The Greys had been part of 4th Armoured Brigade until late 1942 when they were detached and came under the command of the 2nd (NZ) Division. The regiment arrived in Italy on 9 September 1943 as part of the assault force at Salerno, its squadrons having trained extensively with the brigades of 56th Infantry Division before leaving North Africa. After the breakout the Greys led the advance and were among the first troops to enter Naples. After fighting their way across the Volturno River the regiment advanced to the Garigliano where they were informed that they would be rejoining 4th Armoured Brigade and returning to England. The Greys were equipped with Sherman III's and a few turretless M3 Honeys during their service in Italy. On 14 January 1944 the regiment handed all surviving tanks over to 50th RTR of 23rd Armoured Brigade.

The memoirs of one officer state that the regiment was attached to 23rd Armoured Brigade for at least a part of their Italian service however the history published by the Regimental Association makes no mention of it. However, given that the regiment often served with or near to the battalions of 23rd Armoured Brigade it would not be unusual if the Greys did come under the brigade's command at one time or another.

12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales)
This armored car regiment's first action in Italy was as infantry at Castel di Sangro east of Cassino in April 1944. In spring 1945 they spearheaded the advance of 2nd (NZ) Division and B Squadron was the first allied unit to enter Venice. They are known to have been equipped with a number of Greyhound armored cars, probably receiving them in the second half of 1944. In addition to their armored cars the Lancers also operated a number of 75mm armed M3 halftracks and these can be seen in the photo section.

14th/20th King's Hussars
In January 1945 after years of security duties in Iraq and Persia, the Hussars were sent to Italy. Although officially XIII Corps troops the Hussars were attached to 9th Armoured Brigade for most of their Italian service. For the spring 1945 offensive A Squadron relinquished their Shermans for Kangaroo infantry carriers, the 7 April 1945 Situation Report showing 40 Priest conversions on hand. Other tanks on hand at this time included 18 Sherman V, 6 Sherman VC, 4 Sherman IB and 11 Stuart Recce conversions. The Hussars stormed the town of Medicina during the advance to Bologna, thereby earning their most treasured Battle Honour. After taking part in the fighting for the Gaiana Canal the regiment was withdrawn to rest and refit. The regiment's performance with its combination of gun tanks and Kangaroo infantry carriers was so successful that it was intended that a further squadron should be converted. The war ended however before this plan could be carried out.

27th Lancers
Raised from a cadre of 12th Royal Lancers in 1942 the regiment acted as an independent recce regiment in Italy. From 9 October to 27 October 1944 the regiment came briefly under the command of Cumberland Force, at one time replacing A Squadron of the 2nd (NZ) Divisional Cavalry Regiment, who were advancing on Trieste. From 28 October to 12 November the regiment formed the nucleus of Porterforce, named for the Lancer's CO, Lt Colonel Horsburgh-Porter. In December the regiment was at Ravenna and they participated in the battles around Lake Commacchio. During late 1944 the Lancers provided personnel for an ad hoc RASC unit which operated Fantails (the British term for LVT 2 and LVT 4 Buffalo). The regiment crossed the Austrian frontier on 8 May 1945 and were at that time attached to 9th Armoured Brigade Group. The regiment was disbanded after the war, the majority of its men transferring to 12th Lancers.

'T' Scorpion Regiment
Formed in North Africa from a cadre of 41st Royal Tank Regiment and equipped with the Grant Scorpion. One squadron served in Sicily moving to Taranto with 12 Scorpions in late October 1943. In mid 1944 the regiment was used to form the Assault Regiment RAC/RE.

Armoured Units of the Royal Artillery
The valuable contribution made by the regiments and batteries of the Royal Artillery is usually overlooked and deserves at least to be mentioned. It should be noted that the following list is far from complete and much research remains to be done in this area. Hopefully a future volume may cover the role of the Gunners.

11th Royal Horse Artillery (Honourable Artillery Company) (TA)
Operating under the command of 8th Army the regiment's A, B and E Batteries were equipped with 105mm Priests and Stuart AOPs. During the Invasion of Sicily B Battery came under the command of XXX Corps and for a period in September 1944 six guns were attached to 1st Armoured Division.

12th Royal Horse Artillery (Honourable Artillery Company)
Forming the armored artillery component of 6th Armoured Division this regiment was made up from
C, D and F Batteries and in August 1943 was equipped with 105mm Priests and Sherman AOPs.

24th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery
Comprising 22, 50 and 56 Batteries the regiment fought in Sicily as 8th Army troops and at Salerno in September 1943 under X Corps. In June 1944 the regiment was attached to 1st Infantry Division for the landing at Anzio. They were equipped with 105mm Priests.

98th (Sussex and Surrey Yeomanry, Queen Mary's) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (TA)
Made up from 391, 392 and 471 Batteries and equipped with 105mm Priests this regiment served in Sicily under XIII Corps and in Italy, including the Cassino battles, as 8th Army troops.

121st (West Riding) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (TA)
Equipped with the 25pdr Bishop this regiment consisted of 275 and 276 Batteries. Serving in Italy as 8th Army troops from September 1943 to January 1944 when they were withdrawn to convert to a medium artillery regiment.

142nd (Royal Devon Yeomanry) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (TA)
Another Bishop unit, this regiment was made up of 383, 384 and 506 Batteries and served in
Sicily under XXX Corps. At Salerno the regiment was attached to 46th Infantry Division and at the Volturno and Cassino came under the command of 8th Army.

57th (East Surrey) Anti-tank Regiment, RA (TA)
Equipped with the M10 Wolverine Tank Destroyer, the regiment contained 192, 225, 226 and 227 Batteries. From May 1944 they came under the control of 8th Army and fought at Salerno and Cassino.

67th Anti-tank Regiment, RA (TA)
Attached to 56th Infantry Division and containing 265, 266, 267 and 268 Batteries. In late 1944 the regiment was equipped with a number of M10 Wolverines and Achilles 17pdrs.

72nd Anti-tank Regiment, RA (TA)
This regiment provided the anti-tank element of 6th Armoured Division from March 1944 to May 1945 It was made up of 111,112,113 and 327 Batteries and was partly equipped with the Wolverine.

93rd (Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) Anti-tank Regiment, RA (TA)
Under the command of V Corps from September 1943 to May 1945 by late 1944 the regiment was equipped with the M10 and Achilles 17pdr tank

destroyers. As a matter of interest the regiment had previously been armed with the Pheasant – a 17pdr anti-tank gun mounted on a 25pdr carriage.

105th Anti-tank Regiment, RA
Consisting of 209, 314, 315 and 316 Batteries this regiment served under 8th Army command from September 1943 until May 1945, re-equipping with M10's in May 1944. In early 1944 the regiment consisted of two batteries of M10 Wolverines and one towed 17pdr battery. By late 1944 or early 1945 the regiment's establishment was two batteries of Valentine 17pdr (Archers), one battery of M10 Wolverines and one battery of towed 17pdr guns. The regimental history suggests that they were less than happy with the performance of the Archers.

Units of the RAC attached to Infantry Divisions
Created in January 1941 the Reconnaissance Corps provided the recce regiments attached to each infantry division. The regiments were numbered, with certain exceptions, for their parent division. These regiments were equipped with armored cars and carriers and operated far in advance of the infantry element, often in concert with – and even under the command of - armored units. On 1 January 1944 the Reconnaissance Corps, while retaining its role, organization and unique insignia, was incorporated into the RAC and renamed the Reconnaissance Regiment.

1st Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Converted from the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion in June 1942 the regiment remained with 1st Infantry Division until the end of the war in May 1945. The regiment took part in the fighting on Pantellaria as a prelude to the invasion of Sicily. The division arrived on the Italian mainland in December 1943 and subsequently saw action at Anzio from January to May 1944 and at the Gothic Line in August under XIII Corps. In January 1945 the division was sent to Palestine were they remained until the war's end.

4th Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Attached to 4th Infantry Division until the end of the war in May 1945. The division landed in Italy in February 1944 and served at Cassino and in the Liri Valley in May. After advancing through Arezzo in July and Florence in August the division was sent to Greece in December 1944. During their Italian service this regiment's vehicles carried a badge of a black panther on a diagonally divided yellow over light green rectangle.

5th Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Converted from the 5th Reconnaissance Battalion in June 1942 the regiment remained with 5th Infantry Division until the end of the war in May 1945. The division took part in the Sicily Landings in July 1943 and under XIII Corps saw action at Messina in September, the Sangro battles during November and December 1943 and the Garigliano Crossing in January 1944. The division was sent to reinforce (US) VI Corps at Anzio in early 1944 and was part of the drive on Rome in June. The division left Italy in February 1945.

46th Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Held in reserve during the invasion of Sicily, the regiment was the first allied unit to enter the town of Salerno in support of the Commandos. Under V Corps the regiment fought at the Gothic Line in Aug 1944. The regiment remained with 46th Infantry Division until the end of the war in May 1945.

51st Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Attached to 51st (Highland) Infantry Division and transferred to Britain shortly after Sicily was secured.

44th Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
This regiment was attached to the 56th (City of London) Division and served from 9 September 1943 when the division landed at Salerno until the war's end in May 1945. The division took part in the capture of Naples and the Volturno Crossing in October 1943. In January 1944 they were at the Garigliano and later that month landed at Anzio. In September the division saw action at Corriano on the Gothic Line and later in the year at the Lamone Crossing. Finally in April 1945 the division took part in the fighting at the Argenta Gap.

56th Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps
Attached to 78th Infantry Division this regiment took part in the operations on Sicily from 25 July 1943. The regiment took part in the Salerno landings under X Corps. In July 1944 while the division was refitting in Egypt the regiment received 28 Greyhound armored cars. They returned to Italy in mid-September 1944 and fought at the Gothic Line under V Corps. Serving in Italy until the war's end, the regiment was the first British recce unit to enter Vienna.

Armoured Units of the Royal Engineers
Assault Regiment RAC/RE
Formed from elements of 'T' Scorpion Regiment in Autumn 1944

25th Armoured Engineer Brigade
Formed around the Assault Regiment RAC/RE which was renamed 'A' Armoured Engineer Regiment and then 1st Armoured Engineer Regiment. The brigade was completed by 2nd Armoured Engineer Regiment and 51st Royal Tank Regiment, the latter operating two squadrons of Churchill Crocodile flamethrower tanks and one squadron of Sherman Crabs. The formation of the Armoured Engineer Brigade was a direct response to the difficult Italian terrain and must have been influenced by the success of 79th Armoured Division. The list of the brigade's equipment, although lengthy, gives a good indication of its mission and is worth repeating here. In April 1945 the brigade had on hand 16 Sherman III, 6 Sherman V, 3 Sherman IB and 11 Sherman V Crabs (the II version equipped with a contouring device). Also held were 8 Sherman bridgelaying tanks - which were actually pairs of tanks acting as pushers and carriers for Plymouth mobile Bailey bridges - and a number of Sherman III Dozers. Of the brigade's Churchills 31 were AVREs, 32 Crocodiles and 8 were the 95mm Close Support version. Also on hand were a number of Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs) and 30 vehicles referred to as "II Octopi" which is unclear but was the name for the original design which was later developed into the Twaby ARK.

A Final Word
Some confusion has arisen regarding the affiliation of certain regiments - most often in an attempt to determine which markings would be appropriate for a given period. It should always be remembered that regiments and battalions were frequently transferred between higher formations on either a permanent basis or placed under the command of a brigade or division as a temporary measure – perhaps only for a matter of a few days. This had been a common practice in 8th Army from the earliest days of the North African campaign and was continued throughout the fighting in Italy.

The phrase "..came under the orders of...." is commonly seen in regimental diaries. To take just one example during late 1943, 46th RTR, 50th RTR and 98th Field Artillery Regiment were temporarily placed under the command of 4th Armoured Brigade. There is however no evidence that these units adopted a new set of markings – indeed there is photographic evidence that tanks retained their 23rd Armoured Brigade insignia.

Furthermore, independent armored brigades were not formed with the intention that they should fight as a brigade but rather support infantry units in regiment, squadron or even troop strength as required. In May 1944 6th RTR had its B Squadron under the command of 20th Indian Infantry Brigade while C Squadron was with 25th Indian Infantry Brigade. This was not an unusual situation but rather the norm. It should also be noted that the system of Divisional Unit Serial numbers was not strictly adhered to in Italy. There are confirmed instances of numbers authorized for use in Britain and those intended for use in the Mediterranean being in use at the same time despite an order of 5 July 1943 which sought to standardize the numbers then in use. There is also strong photographic evidence that numbers which were held by units as "spares" were still being put into use long after the practice was officially halted in October 1943.

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A Sherman III leaves a landing craft during an exercise on the North African coast. Preparations for the invasion of Sicily were underway as soon as the North African campaign was concluded. Rather typically the only marking carried is the red/white/red recognition sign at the centre of the transmission cover and, barely visible, on the hull side. 6 June 1943. (IWM NA3513)

A Universal Carrier is towed ashore, as troops unload ammunition from a landing craft in the background. The vehicle is painted in a Light Mud and Black camouflage pattern. The Formation Badge of 51st (Highland) Division is just visible on the far mudguard and the W marking on the sandshield may have been peculiar to this division during the Sicily operations. 10 July 1943. (IWM NA4184)

A Universal Carrier is towed ashore from a landing craft during the landings in Sicily while others wait on the beach. Painted in the standard Light Mud with Black disruptive camouflage, just visible at the left rear of the vehicle is a large number 89, the Unit Serial Number of the junior battalion of the junior brigade of an infantry division. July 1943. (IWM A17918)

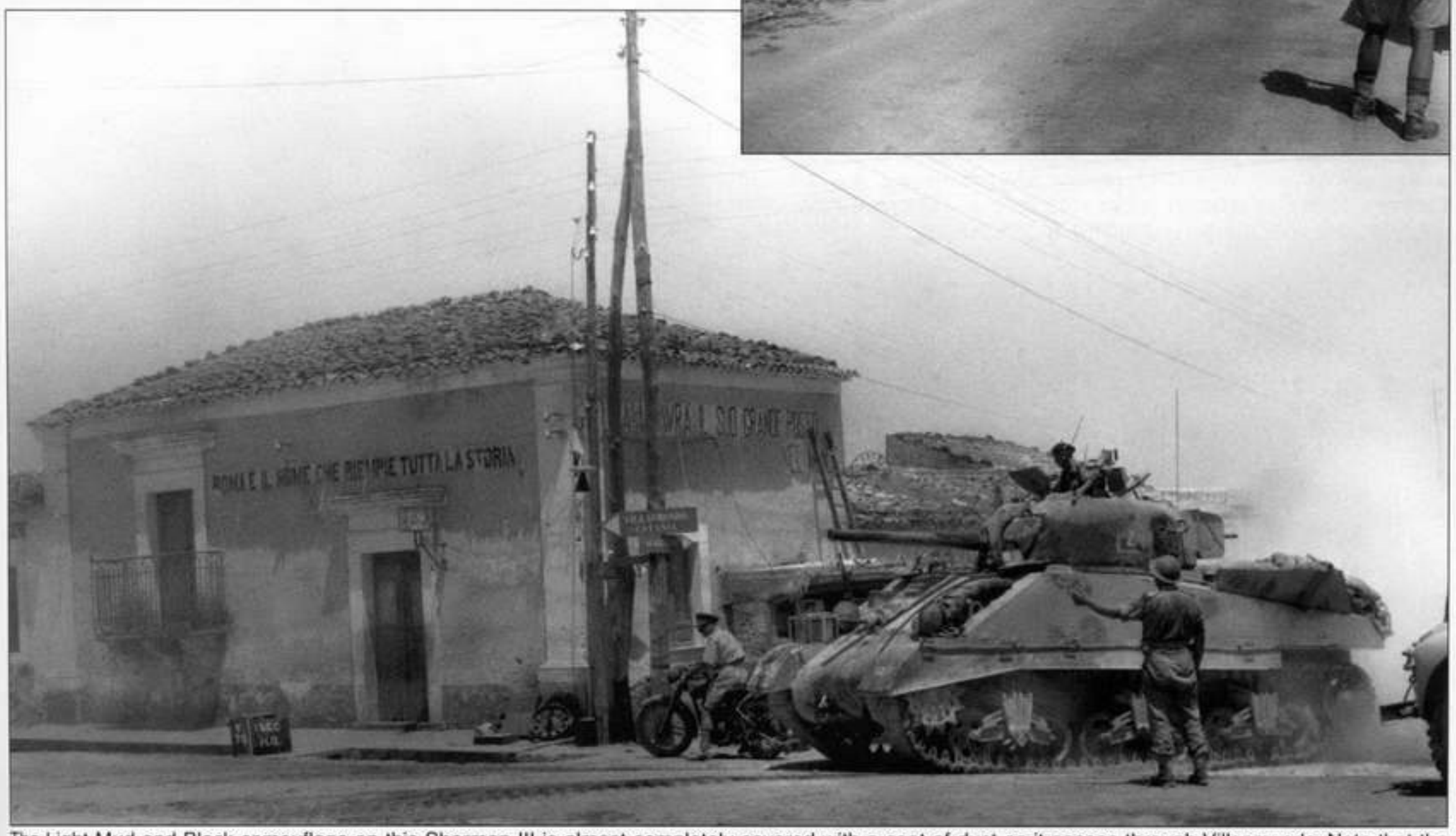
British troops advance through Pachino during the invasion of Sicily. The town was secured in the early stages of the invasion by XXX Corps and this Sherman probably belongs to one of the regiments of 23rd Armoured Brigade. July 1943. (IWM NA4411)

A Sherman III advances during the fighting in Sicily. The British armored force for the invasion was made up of 3rd County of London Yeomanry and 44th RTR of 4th Armoured Brigade and B Squadron, 46th RTR and 50th RTR of 23rd Armoured Brigade. This tank is devoid of any markings other than the landing ship number on the turret side. However, the driver's cap badge does seem to be that of the Royal Tank Regiment and the curious metal frames are indicative of 50th RTR. Note that the 2" Bomb Thrower is held in the MG mount behind the commander. 10 July 1943. (IWM NA4197)

A Sherman III of one of the battalions of the Royal Tank Regiment moves down a typical road in Sicily. No markings other than the red/white/red recognition sign on hull front and sides and the original US shipping markings are visible. 10 July 1943. (IWM NA4362)

A military policeman directs a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun of 24th Field Regiment, RA identified by the AoS sign of white 332 on a red over blue square. The white bar at the bottom of the square signifies troops under Army control and the small AC lettering above denotes the 3rd Gun, 1st Troop, 1st Battery of a self-propelled unit. The 8th Army Formation Badge is visible in front of the machine gun pulpit. 12 July 1943. (IWM NA4384)

A member of the AFPU (Army Film and Photographic Unit) photographs a Sherman III passing down a road in Sicily. Of note are the early direct vision blocks and 'Double I' tracks. Although no identifying marks are visible the sections of sandshield welded to the rear hull are typical of 4th Armoured Brigade and the RTR cap badge is just visible. 12 July 1943. (IWM NA4649)



The Light Mud and Black camouflage on this Sherman III is almost completely covered with a coat of dust as it passes through Villasmundo. Note that the rear section of the sandshield has been removed and welded to the hull, a common practice with 4th Armoured Brigade. 13 July 1943. (IWM NA4709)

A Universal Carrier with men of Black Watch, 51st (Highland) Division on a road near Palazzolo. The significance of the W marking is not known but is commonly seen on carriers during the fighting in Sicily, particularly this division. 14 July 1943. (IWM NA4439)

Photographed in the streets of Francofonte during the so called Drive for Messina this Sherman III sports the unusual rail attachments commonly seen on 50th RTR tanks and the RTR cap badge is just visible in the original photo. July-August 1943. (IWM NA4448)

A Sherman III and supporting infantry advance through the town of Carlinitini. Note that although the rear sections of sandshield have been removed only one has been attached to the hull. 15 July 1943. (IWM NA4536)

A Sherman III tank crewman 'pulls through' the 75mm main gun after an action near Catania. The only markings visible are the red/white/red recognition sign painted on the sandshield and the WD number, T 145999. On the original photograph a name, probably in white and beginning with RET, is partly discernible on the forward hull side. Notice the tabs used to connect the sandshields. 22 July 1943. (IWM NA4972)

An early Sherman, probably a III, disembarks from a landing ship in July 1943. This vehicle is painted in the standard camouflage scheme of Light Mud with Black disruptive patterns. This tank is probably of 4th Armoured Brigade, the markings being similar to some of those carried by 3rd County of London Yeomanry. July 1943. (IWM NA4262)

A Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 142nd Field Regiment, RA. Still wearing the US shipping marking above the recognition sign this vehicle is probably painted in Standard Camouflage Colour (SCC) 2, also referred to as Brown, Khaki Brown or Service Drab. 27 July 1943. (IWM NA5076)

From the same sequence as NA5076, the driver of a Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 142nd Field Regiment is shown at his station. The front of the fighting compartment above the driver's head shows what are possibly signs of a two-color camouflage. 27 July 1943. (IWM NA5081)

Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled guns of 142nd Field Regiment, RA firing. This regiment was formed from the Royal Devon Yeomanry in September 1939 and had been equipped with towed, 25pdr guns until shortly before the invasion of Sicily. 27 July 1943. (IWM NA5083)

The markings on this White Scout Car, photographed at Primisole Bridge, are something of a mystery. The large X on a red over blue square identifies a RA Battery commander while the white 77 denotes the anti-tank regiment of an armored division. However, no armored divisions participated in the Sicily invasion. A possible candidate is 73rd Anti-tank Regiment attached to XXX Corps and until January 1943 officially part of 8th Armoured Division. The stylised battle-axe on the side is reminiscent of 78th Infantry Division's Formation Badge. July-August 1943. (IWM NA5281)

A Universal Carrier of 5th (Yorkshire) Infantry Division emerges from a railway tunnel near Scilla. This vehicle is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. September 1943. (IWM NA6482)

A line of Sherman tanks and their crews of 3rd County of London Yeomanry await the order to mount up and advance on Naples. The preponderance of non-regulation items of clothing typified the attitude of 8th Army veterans. September 1943. (IWM NA7250)

A Sherman III of The Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons) comes ashore at Salerno, Italy. The Greys had been operating as an independent regiment since late 1942 although officially part of 4th Armoured Brigade. During that time, it is not clear exactly when, they began to use the Formation Badge seen here – a black over white square with a green and purple thistle. It is doubtful that this badge was used after the Italian Campaign. All tanks carried a red squadron sign on the turret, some with troop number enclosed. They were also named, probably after RN Ships, with the style of lettering differing from one vehicle to another. September 1943. (IWM NA6725)

A half-track of 98th Field Regiment RA passes a 6pdr anti-tank gun at Reggio. This vehicle is shown and discussed further in the illustrations. 3 September 1943. (IWM NA6204)

From the same sequence as the previous photograph, a Priest Self Propelled 105mm gun disembarks at Reggio as part of Operation Baytown. The vehicle is painted in a Light Mud and Black camouflage pattern and the 8th Army formation sign is visible on the left front sandshield. On the hull side can be seen a red bordered, white triangle enclosing what is probably B1, again in red. 3 September 1943. (IWM NA6205)

A Sherman V – note the transmission cover, the shape of the antenna pot and hoods - moves inland at Reggio during Operation Baytown. This tank is in fact probably from a Canadian unit as only 1st Armoured Division – which was still in North Africa - and 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade held any Sherman Vs in the Mediterranean at this time. 3 September 1943. (IWM NA6209)

Universal Carriers drive ashore from a tank landing ship (LST) at Salerno as part of Operation Avalanche. Although any distinguishing unit markings appear to have been painted over, the nearest vehicle displays an AoS sign indicating the senior battalion, junior infantry brigade of an infantry division. Both 46th Infantry and 56th (London) Infantry Divisions took part in this operation. 9 September 1943. (IWM NA6622)

A Sherman III of 40th Royal Tank Regiment reversing into a landing ship at Bizerta, Tunisia. Although part of 23rd Armoured Brigade, 40th RTR did not participate in the operations on Sicily and only joined 46th RTR and 50th RTR once the landings on the Italian mainland were underway. Note the early, symmetrical track skids. 4-9 September 1943. (IWM NA6653)

A Sherman III moves inland on the road to Battipaglia during Operation Avalanche, the landings at Salerno. The standard camouflage at this time consisted of a base coat of Light Mud, described by veterans as either a light grey or dirty grey-beige, with a disruptive pattern of Black or Dark Olive Green. The high degree of contrast is obvious here. 9 September 1943. (IWM NA6646)

A Sherman III loaded with infantry is cheered by local people as it passes through Salerno. Although no markings are visible the Royal Tank Regiment cap badge can be discerned in the original photograph. Of note is the non-standard sight on the top of the turret. Although not definitive, this was a common feature on tanks of 46th RTR. 10 September 1943. (IWM NA6802)

The crew of a Sherman III from the Royal Scots Greys chat to RAMC personnel travelling in a pony and trap. Just visible on the turret side is a red C squadron circle enclosing a number 5. Note the hatch cover in front of the driver's position – a common sight on tanks of this regiment. 12-13 September 1943. (IWM NA6833)

Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 506th Battery, 142nd Field Regiment in action. Compare this vehicle with those of the same unit seen in Sicily. 14 September 1943. (IWM NA6866)

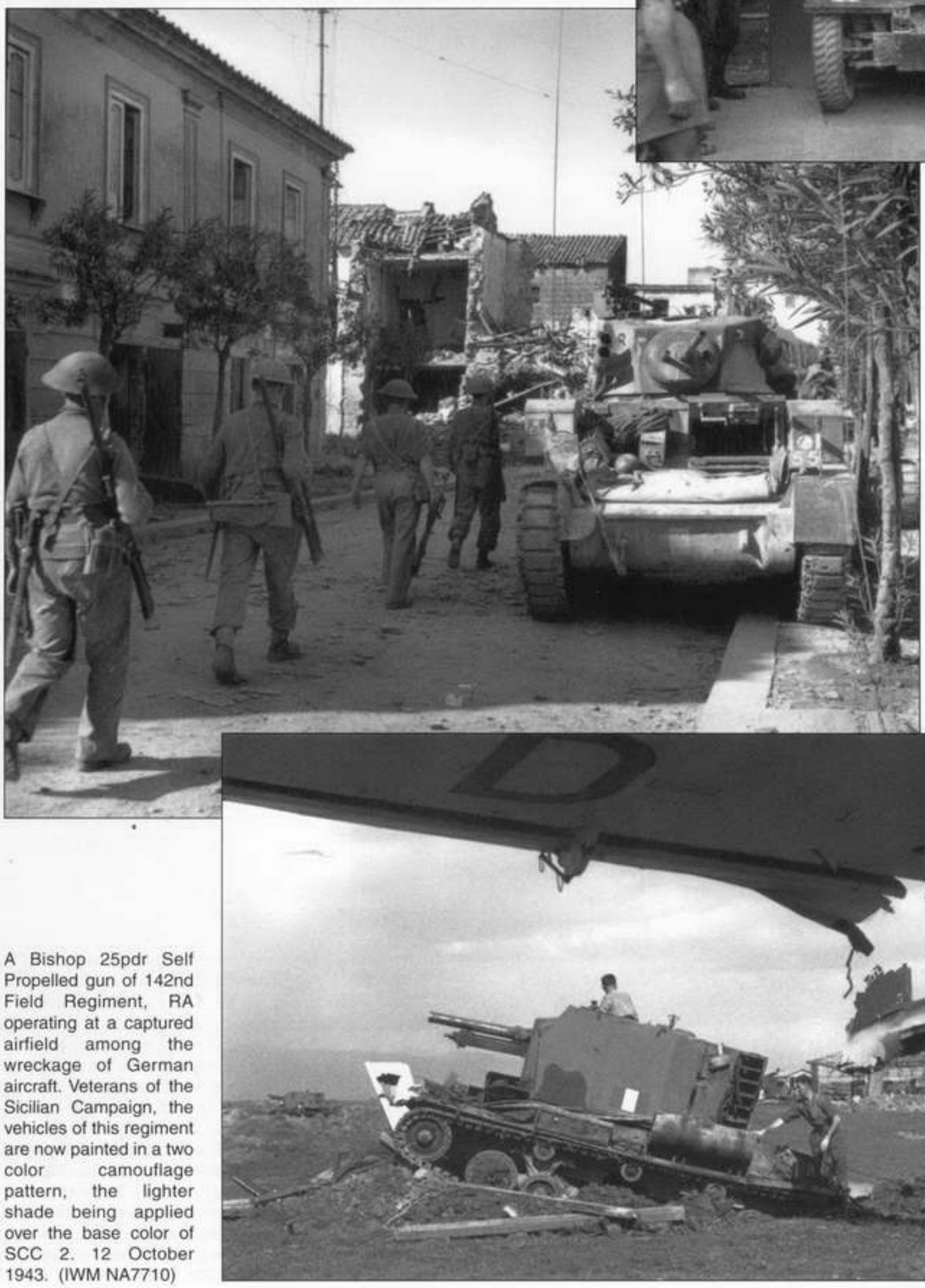
A column of Sherman tanks waits to move forward at Cava near Salerno. The nearest tank retains the waterproofing over the direct vision slots on the hull front. Almost completely obscured by dust is a camouflage scheme of Light Mud applied over the original base coat of US Army Olive Drab. 16 September 1943. (IWM NA7158)

A Sherman III crew with a local Italian girl in Cava. The name DIZZY has been painted, probably in white, just in front of the driver's position. A Bomb Thrower has replaced the commander's MG. 24 September 1943. (IWM NA7101)

A Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun photographed near Cava. 28 September 1943. (IWM NA7259)

From the same sequence as NA7259, the markings shown on this Bishop are unusual, the Unit Serial Number 45 usually denoting an armored reconnaissance regiment attached to an armored division. However, this is obviously not the case and this vehicle may belong to 142nd Field Regiment, RA which was attached to 46th Infantry Division at about this time and may have used a "spare" number on the artillery's red over blue square. The practice of higher formations retaining a block of numbers as spare to normal requirements is discussed in the text. 28 September 1943. (IWM NA7260)

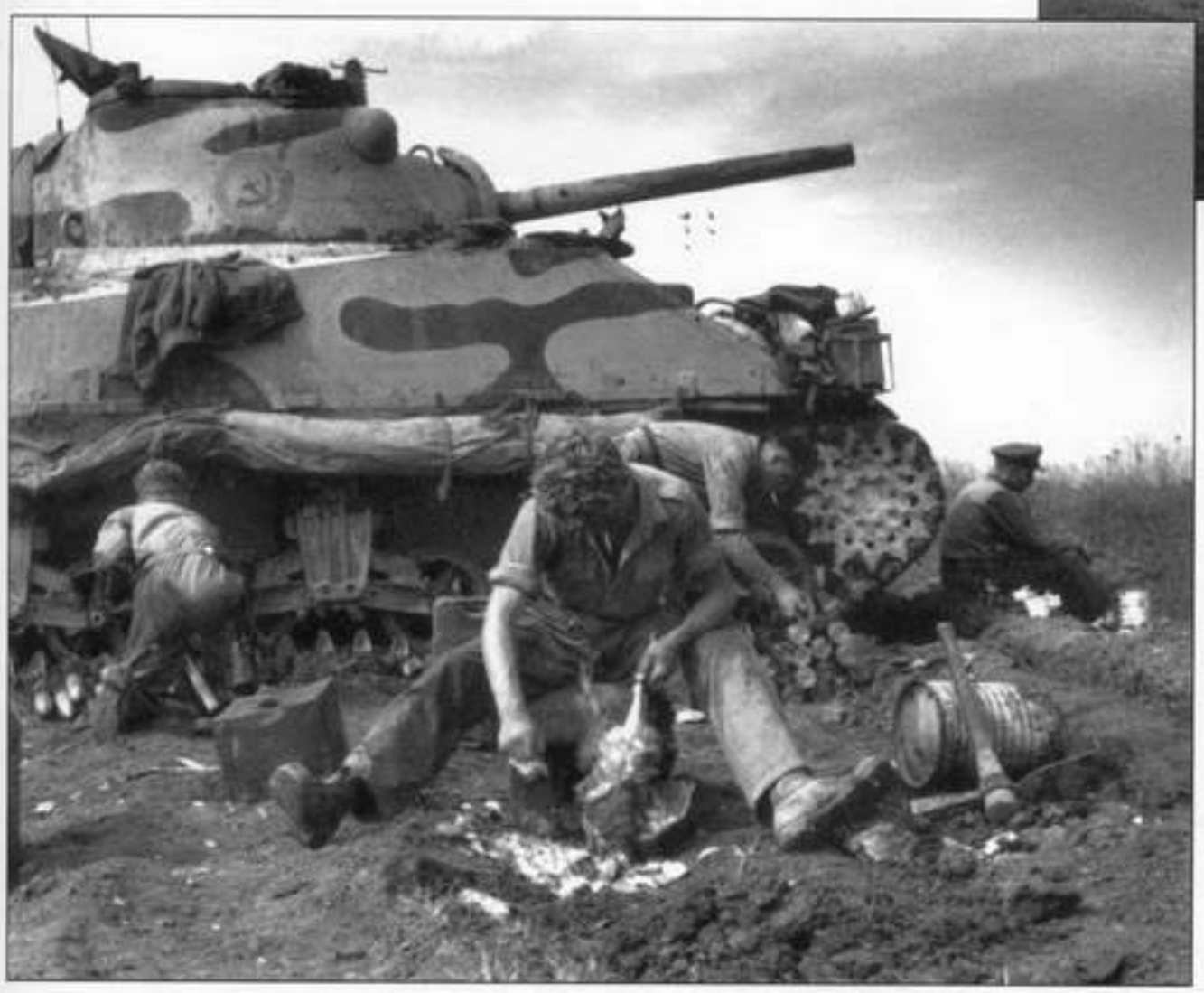
The original caption to this photograph states that this Daimler scout car is from the King's Dragoon Guards, seen entering the town hall in Naples. However, the Unit Serial Number 63 would seem to indicate the junior regiment of an infantry brigade attached to an armored division. The only complete British armored division in Italy at this time was 7th Armoured. 1 October 1943. (IWM NA7433)



Infantry of the 7th Queen's Regiment and a Stuart OP tank in Grazzanise. The AoS markings above the right front mudguard denote 3rd RHA with the 7th Armoured Division Formation Badge above that. On the left are two signs indicating the troop commander of C Troop, M/P Battery – the batteries of the RHA being identified by letters. 12 October 1943. (IWM NA7706)

A Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 142nd Field Regiment, RA operating at a captured airfield among the wreckage of German aircraft. Veterans of the Sicilian Campaign, the vehicles of this regiment are now painted in a two color camouflage pattern, the lighter shade being applied over the base color of SCC 2. 12 October 1943. (IWM NA7710)

This dramatic image shows a Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 142nd Field Regiment RA, firing during the night barrage that preceded the crossing of the Volturno. The gun is mounted on the wreckage of a German aircraft to obtain more elevation. 12 October 1943. (IWM NA7712)



Activity around a Sherman tank, probably a III, as routine maintenance is carried out while one of the crew plucks a chicken for the evening meal. Sharp eyes will have noticed the "Hammer and Sickle" motif in the centre of the C squadron sign. This tank is probably from 4th County of London Yeomanry of 22nd Armoured Brigade. 15 October 1943. (IWM NA7779)

A raft loaded with Universal Carriers being hauled across the Volturno River. The Unit Serial Number 62 denotes a second senior battalion of the junior infantry brigade of an infantry division. 16 October 1943. (IWM NA7760)

Taken from the same sequence as the previous photograph, a carrier passes through a gap in the steep north bank of the Volturno cut by 272nd Field Company, Royal Engineers. Such gaps had to be cut in the banks on both sides of the river under heavy enemy fire before any vehicles could cross the river in support of the assault troops. (IWM NA7761)

An Otter Light Reconnaissance Car crossing a Bailey bridge over the Volturno River at Grazzanise. The AoS sign represents an independent artillery regiment while the 8th Army Formation Badge is shown above that. The letters RA seen on the left mudguard indicate the troop commander of A troop, 1st Battery of a field artillery regiment. 14-16 October 1943. (IWM NA7854)

A Sherman III of C Squadron, 4th County of London Yeomanry fording the Volturno river at Grazzanise. The absence of any unit identifying formation badges or markings was common at this time. 17 October 1943. (IWM NA7858)

Taken from the same sequence as the previous photo, another Sherman III of 4th County of London Yeomanry with attached wading trunk is seen fording the Volturno. Note that the camouflage patterns, although applied according to the guidelines, are not identical. Of note also is the unusual placement of the WD number. 17 October 1943. (IWM NA 7862)

A heavily laden Sherman III of B Squadron, the Royal Scots Greys fording the Teano river. On the side below the red/white/red recognition marking is painted BRAMHAM MOOR probably in white. The name has been painted over other letters and numbers of which only a large, dark 23 can be read. 29 October 1943. (IWM NA8276)

An early M3 Stuart tank, called Honeys by their British crews, about to have an engine change at a REME workshop. 7 November 1943. (IWM NA8865)

A Sherman III undergoing an engine change at a REME workshop. The only markings visible are the WD number, 145437, on the hull side and a bridge classification marking at the centre of the transmission housing. 7 November 1943. (IWM NA8867)

Children watch a Sherman tank crewman writing a Christmas card. The cap badge would seem to be that of the County of London Yeomanry. Of note are the early, symmetrical track skids and the rail to attach the sandshield. 17 November 1943. (IWM NA9095)

An overturned Sherman III is examined by a curious infantryman. Although no identifying markings are visible, this is one of the rare photographs where the aerial recognition roundel can be seen. 30 November 1943. (IWM NA9426)

A mule train carrying ammunition passes a bogged down Sherman, possibly an elderly Sherman I or III, in the forward positions in the Sangro River area. The tank is probably from 3rd County of London Yeomanry of 4th Armoured Brigade. November 1943. (IWM NA8942)

Tanks of the 3rd County of London Yeomanry, probably Sherman IIIs, near Torino di Sangro prepare to move up to the River Sangro. In the foreground is a pile of 4.5 inch shells waiting to be used in the artillery barrage in support of the assault. November 1943. (IWM NA 8906)

A Sherman III makes its way along the main street in Torino Di Sangro, passing mules of the 8th Indian Division. Barely visible is a number 25 towards the rear of the turret on the left hand side in a very unusual style of lettering. 22 November 1943. (IWM NA 8911)

A Sherman III of B Squadron, Warwickshire Yeomanry, passing Indian infantry in Frisa. A name, unfortunately indecipherable even in the original photograph, has been painted above the red/white/red recognition sign on the hull side. 14 December 1943. (IWM NA9810)

Bishop 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 142nd Field Regiment, RA on a Diamond T tank transporter of 610th Heavy Recovery Section, REME. This vehicle carries the same, unusual Unit Serial Number 45 seen in NA 7260. Note that the disruptive camouflage on the Scammel is separated by a much lighter - possibly white - line. 23 December 1943. (IWM NA10150)

Men of the 1st Royal Fusiliers wait in ambush in a captured German Marder 75mm Self Propelled gun. The vehicle has not only been given a set of British markings, including the crudely painted roundel, but also appears to have received a coat of Light Mud and Black camouflage. 30 December 1943. (IWM NA10439)

Taken from the same sequence as NA10439 this view shows the interior to good effect. Also displayed prominently are the AoS sign of a white 65 on a red square identifying the HQ of the senior infantry brigade and a regimental insignia. 30 December 1943. (IWM NA10438)

An Albion lorry leads a Sexton 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 24th Field Regiment, RA ashore at Anzio. January 1944. (IWM NA11392)

A good view of the fighting compartment of a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun with the crew filling the shell racks. 17 January 1944. (IWM NA10923)

A Sherman III crosses the River Garigliano on an improvised ferry. Even at this late date the early, two color camouflage schemes could still be seen. 19 January 1944. (IWM NA10957)

Taken from the same sequence as NA10957 another Sherman III is guided onto the ferry. Barely visible on the hull side are the remnants of the original shipping markings applied before the tank left the United States fixing the color firmly as US Army Olive Drab. The steel cleat tracks and rear stowage arrangement are typical of Shermans of 23rd Armoured Brigade. Unusually this tank has no blanket box. 20 January 1944. (IWM NA11066)

The tank at the right of this photograph is the same as that shown in NA11066. These vehicles are moving north from the Garigliano River towards Lorenzo. 21 January 1944. (IWM NA11235)

An early waterproofed Sherman III with wading trunks attached comes ashore from a landing craft at Anzio. The 23rd Armoured Brigade "Liverbird" Formation Badge and AoS sign of a white 86 on a red square, identifying 46th RTR, can be seen on the transmission cover. Note the M3 Halftrack in the background. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11034)

A Sherman III of 23rd Armoured Brigade coming ashore from a landing craft at Anzio. Of the three battalions of the brigade only 46th RTR was present at Anzio. The names LANCASTER has been painted onto the turret and MARGARET in front of the driver. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11035)

Universal Carriers and a Sherman III, the latter probably of 46th RTR, driving up the beach at Anzio. The AoS sign shown on the carriers is that of a second senior battalion of a junior infantry brigade. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11041)

A Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun of 24th Field Regiment, RA comes ashore from a landing craft at Anzio. The 8th Army Formation Badge can be seen just behind the handlebars of the motorcycle. 22 January 1944. (IWM NA11209)

Sherman tanks of 46th RTR fire in support of the Loyal Regiment at Anzio. In the original photograph the remains of US shipping markings can be made out on the hull side. In front of those, just below the driver's hatch, are written the names WIGAN, LEEDS, NEWPORT, ROTHERHAM and another name which is indecipherable – obviously the homes of the crew. 25 January 1944. (IWM NA11412)

Men of the Irish Guards advance behind a Sherman III of 46th RTR north of Anzio. This photo clearly shows the older system of Unit Serial Numbers still in use. Note the non-standard location of the .50 cal MG on the turret roof. 25 January 1944. (IWM NA11445)

Shells being prepared for a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun in action at Anzio. This photograph is of interest not only for the depiction of the unusual two color camouflage – separated by a light colored line- but also the elaborate Royal Artillery badge painted onto the vehicle's hull. Unfortunately no other identifying markings are visible. 31 January 1944. (IWM NA11636)

From the same sequence as NA11636 and possibly showing the same vehicle - a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun in action at Anzio. 31 January 1944. (IWM NA11634)

Men of the 2/7th Middlesex Regiment in one of their machine gun carriers. The regiment formed the Machine Gun Battalion of 1st Infantry Division from May 1944 and the vehicle shown here is probably in training prior to joining the division. Note the waterproofing in front of the machine gun. 21 February 1944. (IWM NA12113)

An Armoured Command Vehicle (ACV) of 23rd Armoured Brigade HQ at Francolise. Just visible on the left hand mudguard is an AoS sign made up of a red 71 on the blue over white of the Royal Corps of Signals. The brigade's "Liverbird" Formation Badge, symbolising their connection to the City of Liverpool, can be seen on the right. 14 March 1944. (IWM NA12991)

The pilot of a German aircraft, shot down while attacking an ammunition dump in the Anzio bridgehead, descends by parachute. A Humber Mk III Light Reconnaissance Car can be seen in the foreground. The only markings visible on the armored car are the WD Number, M4652230, the large red/white/red recognition marking on the hull side just below the turret – which is repeated at the front – and a small, white A squadron sign on the nearest mudguard. 21 March 1944. (IWM NA13106)

Sherman tanks in use as artillery in the Anzio bridgehead in fixed positions under camouflage nets. These vehicles are almost certainly Sherman IIIs of C Squadron 46th RTR. Note that the tank in the background has no pistol port. 5 May 1944. (IWM NA14603)

Repair work being carried out on a Sherman II named ELBOW at No. 1 Advanced Base Workshops. This tank displays features common in later models such as the cast-in armor on the hull sides and the later, more angular transmission housing. The thickness of the waterproofing sealant is clearly shown here. This tank still displays the original US shipping markings which indicate that it was dispatched sometime after 1 May 1944 even though the photograph is dated April. (IWM NA14008)

From the same sequence as NA14603, empty 75mm HE shell cases being collected during a break in firing. 5 May 1944. (IWM NA14606)

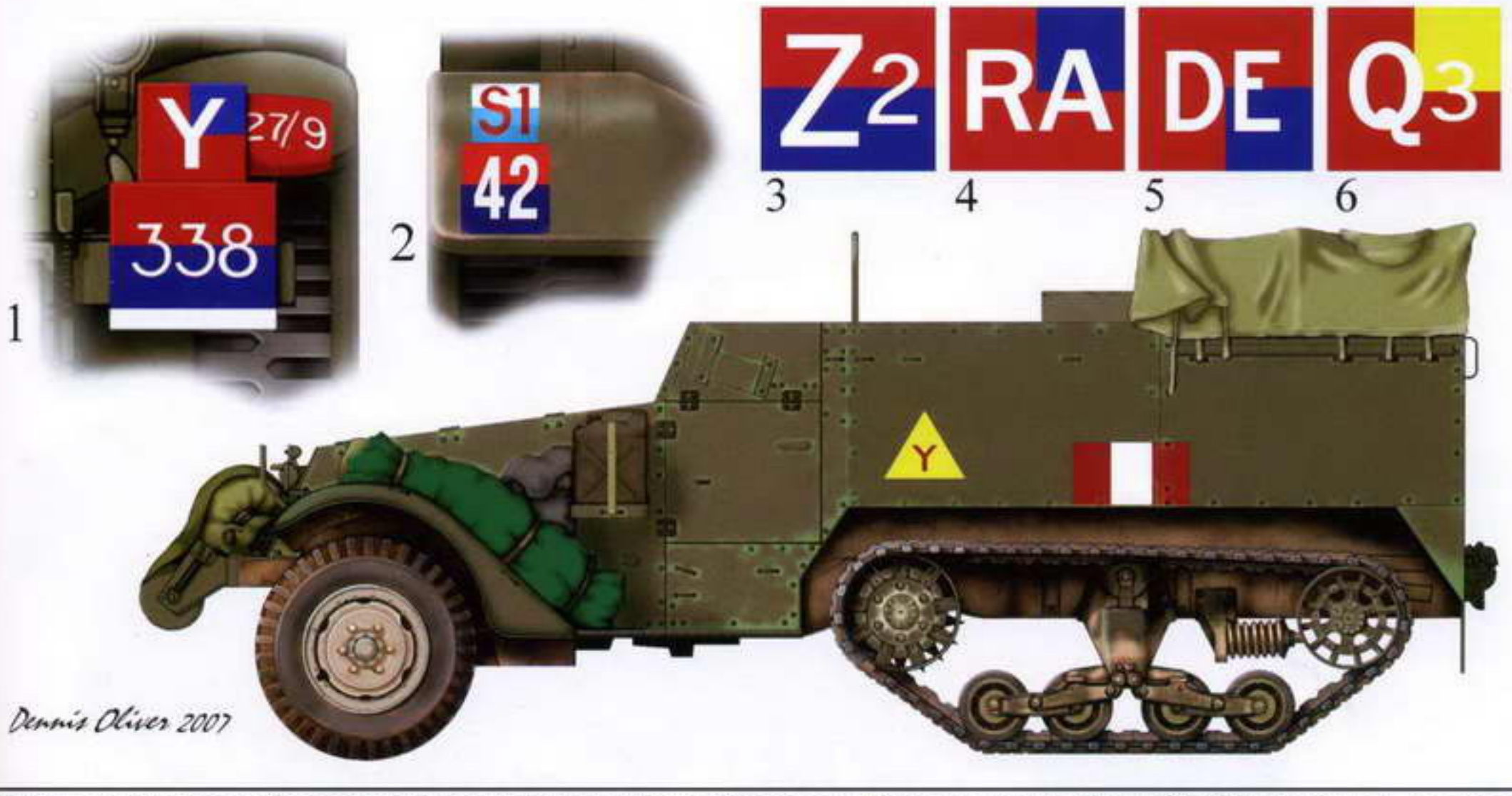
From the same sequence as NA14603 and NA14606, the crew of a 46th RTR Sherman III cook a meal near their camouflaged vehicle. The tanks were being used in the indirect artillery role in the Anzio bridgehead. On the nearest vehicle the turret blanket box, complete with AoS sign, has been welded to the hull rear. 5 May 1944. (IWM NA14609)

Two M3 half-tracks mounting 75mm guns of the King's Dragoon Guards. The correct British designation for these vehicles was '75mm, Self Propelled, Autocar'. These vehicles are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 7 May 1944. (IWM NA14653)

During the fighting around Cassino a Sherman III and Humber Armoured Car wait to move forward behind a protective smoke screen. Just visible on the turret side of the Sherman is an A squadron sign enclosing a number 2 in what appears to be yellow. May 1944. (IWM NA14737)

3rd County of London Yeomanry, Sherman III, August 1943

Photographed at the conclusion of the fighting in Sicily this Sherman III, ABDIEL (1), was probably the mount of A Squadron's commander Major Oliver Woods, MC. The unusual, two-colored squadron sign is usually depicted as red and yellow. However there is no real evidence for this and it is shown here in the green and yellow of the Sharpshooters. All the regiment's tanks received this very neat application of the Light Mud and Black camouflage prior to embarking for the Italian mainland. At top right is shown the Arm of Service (AoS) sign carried by the transport of RHQ (2) which would indicate that they were not considered the senior regiment of the brigade despite the long absence of the Royal Scot's Greys.

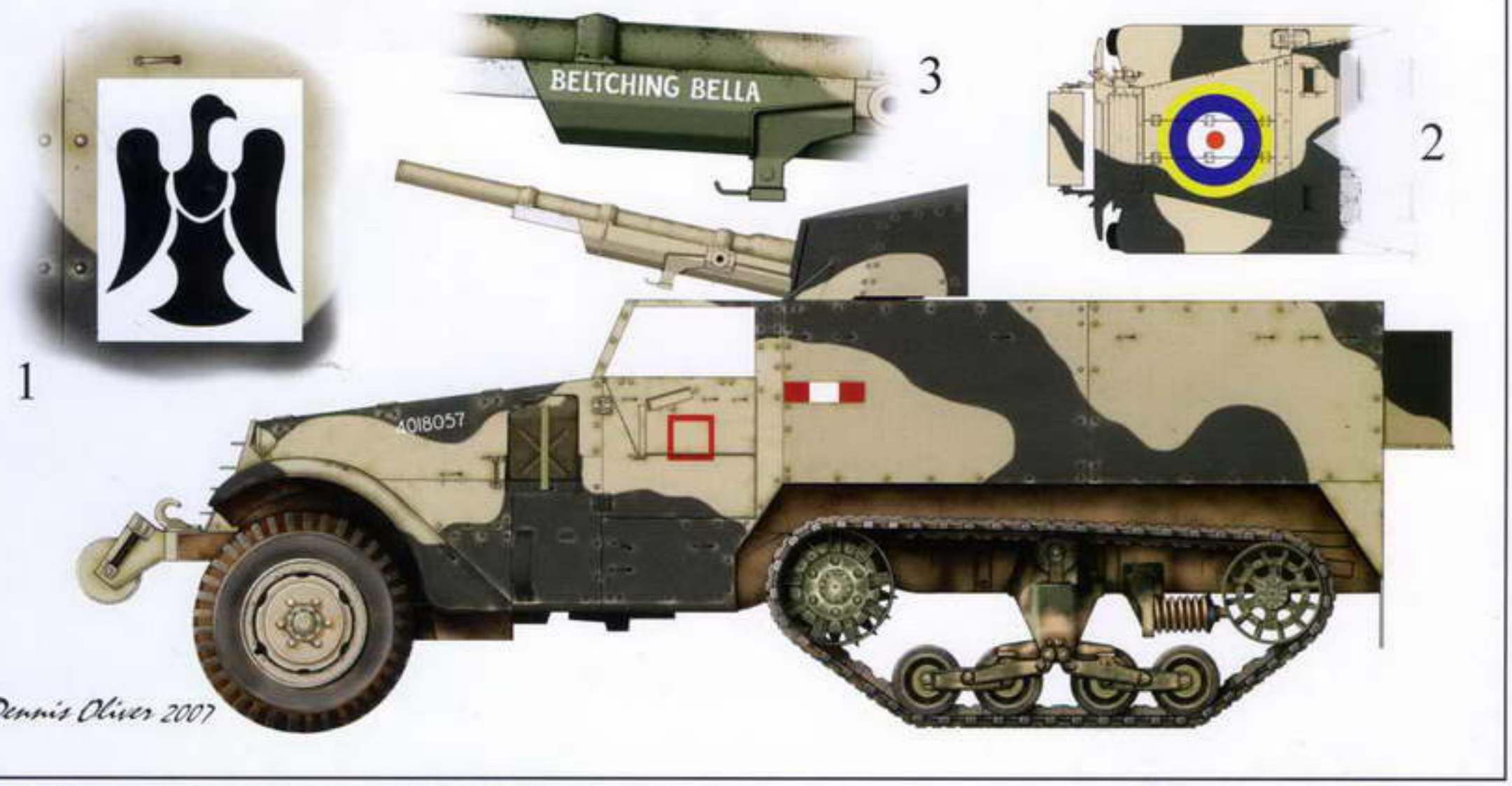


98th (Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry, Queen Mary's) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (TA), AOP M3 Halftrack, September 1943

Lend lease vehicles were usually left in their original US Army Olive Drab as is this M3 Halftrack. In addition to the system of unit serial numbers the Artillery used a series of letter and number codes to identifying units within a regiment. Although far too extensive to be listed here some examples are shown: (1) The array of markings worn by the 98th FA Halftrack - the large AoS sign consisting of a white 338 on a red over blue square identifies 98th Field Regiment. The white bar at the bottom denotes Army level troops. The small square above that indicates the 1st Battery - the letter Y standing for battery command post. The significance of the numbers on the fender is not known; (2) A Royal Corps of Signals unit attached to an artillery regiment; (3) Regiment second in command; (4) Troop commander, 1st Troop, 1st Battery of a towed Field regiment; (5) D Troop, 2nd Battery of a towed medium regiment, and; (6) RA Signals unit of an Artillery Survey regiment.

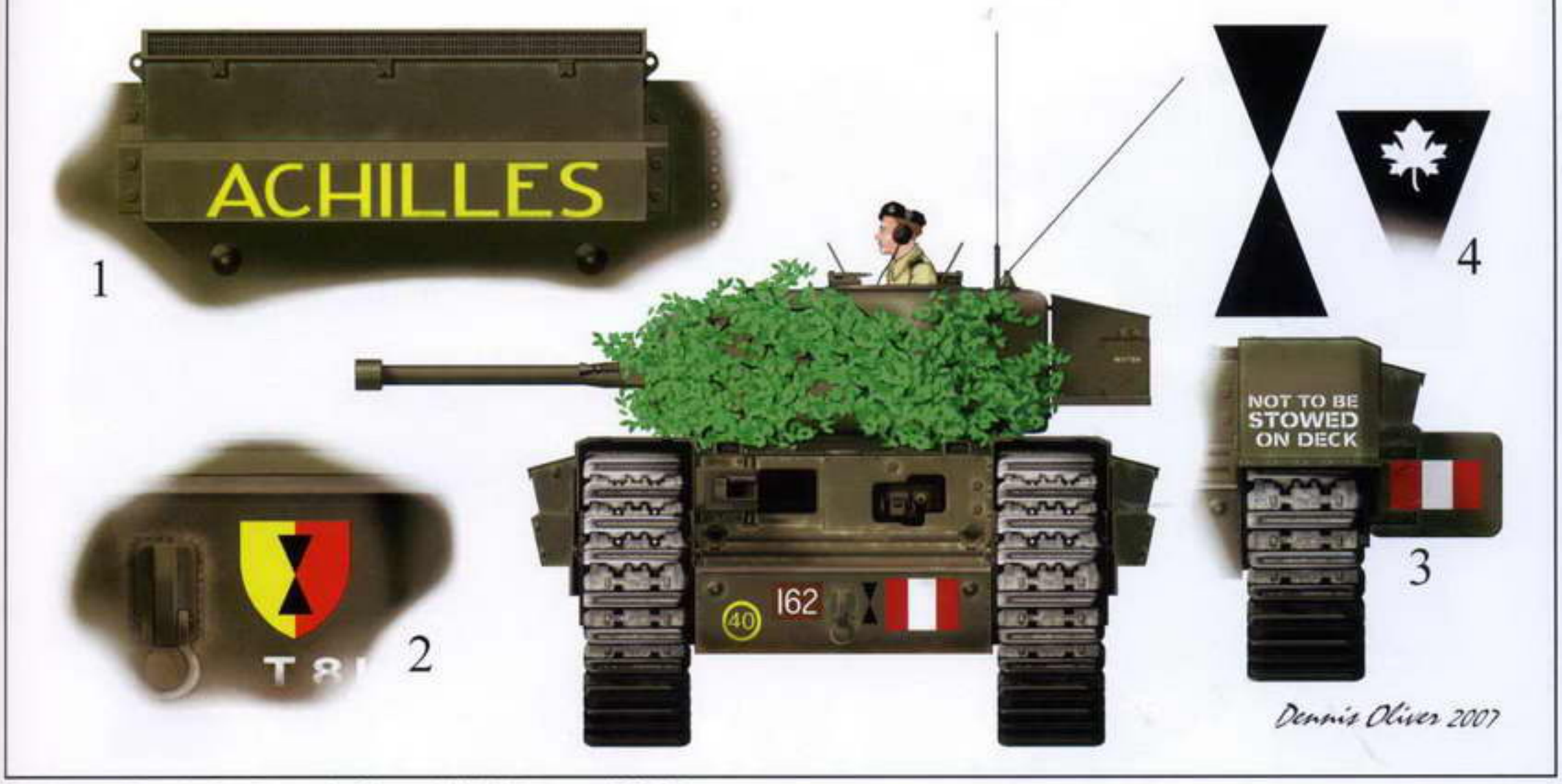
5th Royal Tank Regiment, Sherman III, late 1943

This unit was the second senior regiment of 22nd Armoured Brigade of 7th Armoured Division. The illustration is based on a photograph taken when the division was just north of Naples on the road to Aversa. The name EM-AN-VEE (1), painted in yellow, refers to the "Meat & Veg" as issued in ration packs. The yellow C squadron sign encloses a white number 11, probably the tank's number within the squadron. Not all 22nd Armoured Brigade's tanks carried the formation badge (2) shown here but many did. Also shown is the famous "Desert Rat" formation badge of 7th Armoured Division (3).



1st King's Dragoon Guards, 75mm GMC Halftrack, May 1944

These vehicles provided support for the regiment's armored cars and this example is shown in a disruptive pattern camouflage of Light Mud and Black. There is also photographic evidence that some vehicles were camouflaged with Light Mud over their original Olive Drab. Armored cars of this regiment carried the regiment's distinctive Black Eagle badge (1) and it is shown here. Also shown is the regulation application of the aerial recognition sign (2) for this vehicle type. Some guns, but not all, were named and one example is shown (3).

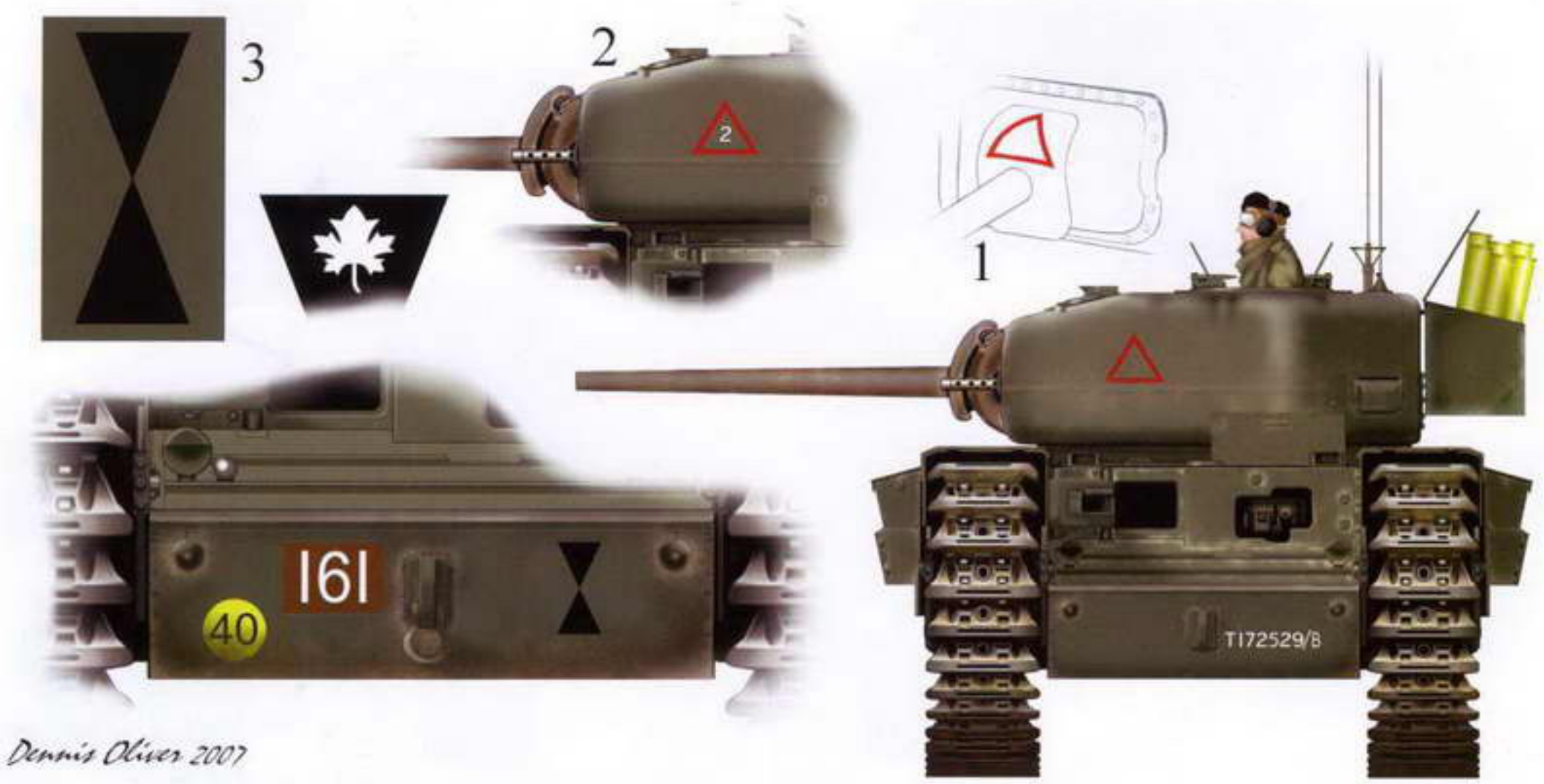


51st Royal Tank Regiment, Churchill IV, August 1944

This illustration is based on several tanks of 51st RTR photographed at about this time. All the tanks were named, other A squadron names included APOLLO, AUDACIOUS (an NA 75), ARROGANT and ADVENTURER, the names being carried on the air intake on the hull sides (1). A full array of markings were carried on the hull front including the Bridge Classification, AoS sign of a white 162 on a very dark brown square, the brigade's 'Diabolo' formation badge (2) and the red/white/red recognition marking. This latter was also commonly seen on the side access doors (3). An appropriate squadron sign was normally displayed on the turret sides but is obscured here by foliage camouflage. In late 1944 the brigade was granted the privilege of adding the white the maple leaf to its formation badge in recognition of its support of the Canadians fighting at the Gothic Line (4).

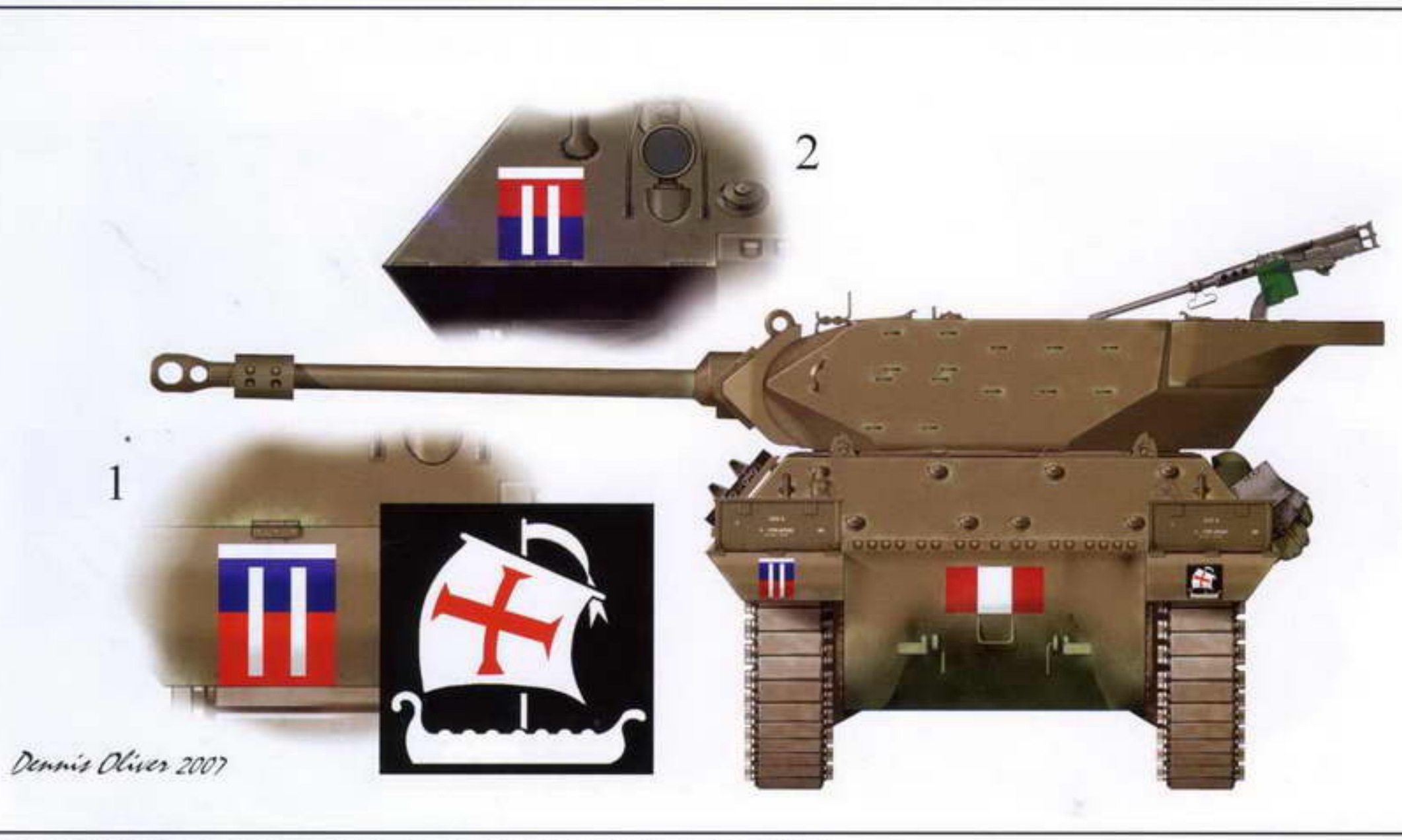
72nd Anti-tank Regiment, Royal Artillery, M10, August 1944

Most M10 Tank Destroyers were left in their original US Army Olive Drab base coat. However, this example from 72nd Anti-tank Regiment of 6th Armoured Division is very clearly painted in a two color camouflage of Light Mud and Black or Dark Olive Green. The red/white/red recognition sign is carried on the hull side, further back than is common on these vehicles and the marking D1, which probably denotes battery and vehicle number, is painted in red on the turret side. Although it is not known if this vehicle carried the anti-tank regiment AoS sign (1) and formation badge (2) others did and they are shown here.



North Irish Horse, Churchill NA 75, September 1944

This tank carries almost no markings other than the A squadron sign on the turret and gun mantlet (1) in the red of a senior regiment and the vehicle's WD number on the hull front. Some tanks displayed the troop number inside the squadron sign (2). The method of carrying shells is confirmed by a photograph. The AoS sign, a white 161 on a very dark brown square, was worn by some tanks. Until January 1945 the North Irish Horse had been part of 25th Tank Brigade and the brigade's "Diabolo" sign is shown at top left (3).



93rd Anti-tank Regiment, Royal Artillery, M10 17 pdr, October 1944

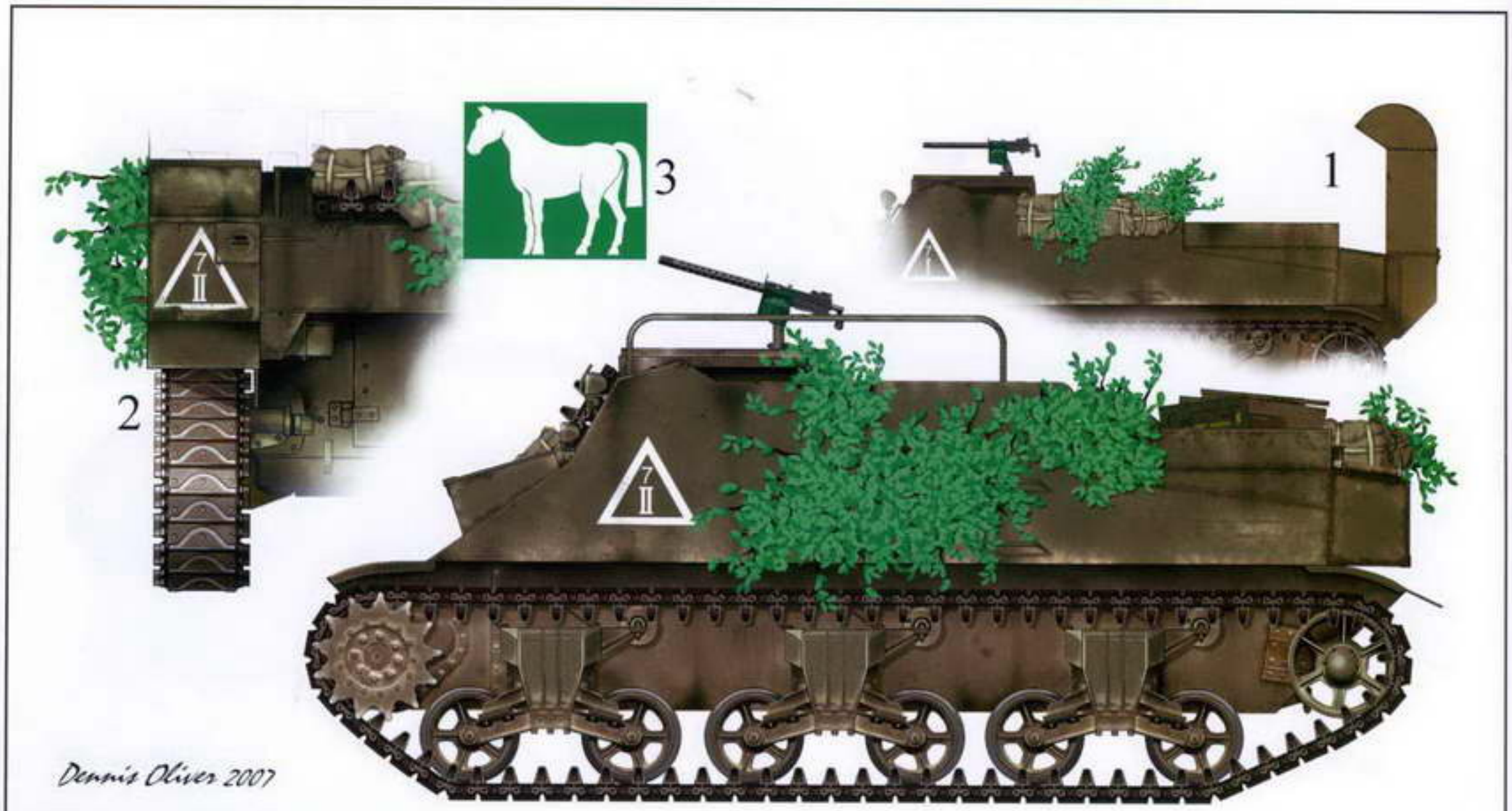
This was an independent regiment controlled by V Corps. Both the Arm of Service (AoS) sign and formation badge (1) have been published previously, both containing serious inaccuracies most notably in the shape of the AoS sign and the background of the "Viking Ship" badge. After studying the available, original photos I am satisfied that those presented here are correct. Although highly unusual – and one can never be sure when working from black and white photographs - it does seem that the artillery colors of red over blue have been reversed on this particular vehicle. The correct style as seen on an M10 of the same unit is shown at the top (2). The 2 inch white bar denotes Corps level troops.

Queen's Bays (2nd Dragoon Guards), Sherman IIA, November 1944

When 1st Armoured Division was broken up in October 1944, 2nd Armoured Brigade became an independent formation. The regiments did however continue to use the same system of markings which had in fact been those used in North Africa. This 76mm armed Sherman displays the AoS sign of the senior regiment of an armored brigade and the "Charging Rhino" badge of 1st Armoured Division (1). This formation badge was carried on the hull side at the rear by at least one of the brigade's Shermans (2). The III B possibly denotes a troop and the tank's place within the troop.

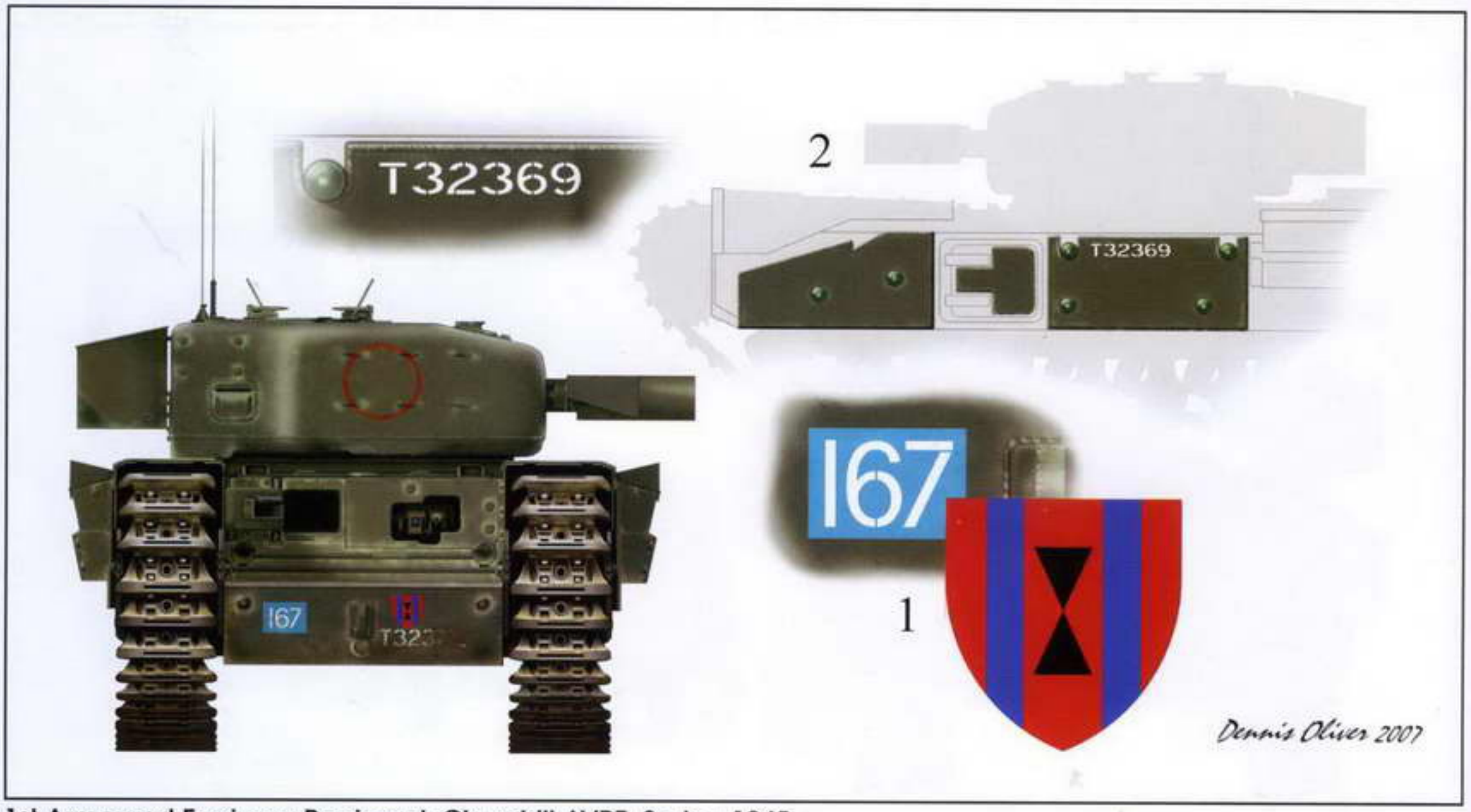
North Irish Horse, Churchill V, late 1944

Gerry Chester who was a crewman of this particular tank kindly supplied the information for these markings. All the regiment's tanks were named for counties and towns of Northern Ireland using the squadron letter. The names were carried on the air intakes on the hull sides as shown here (1). Although the hull front was covered by spare tracks, a full set of markings was carried including 21st Tank Brigade's colorful formation badge (2) and the regiment's unit serial number of 173 (3).



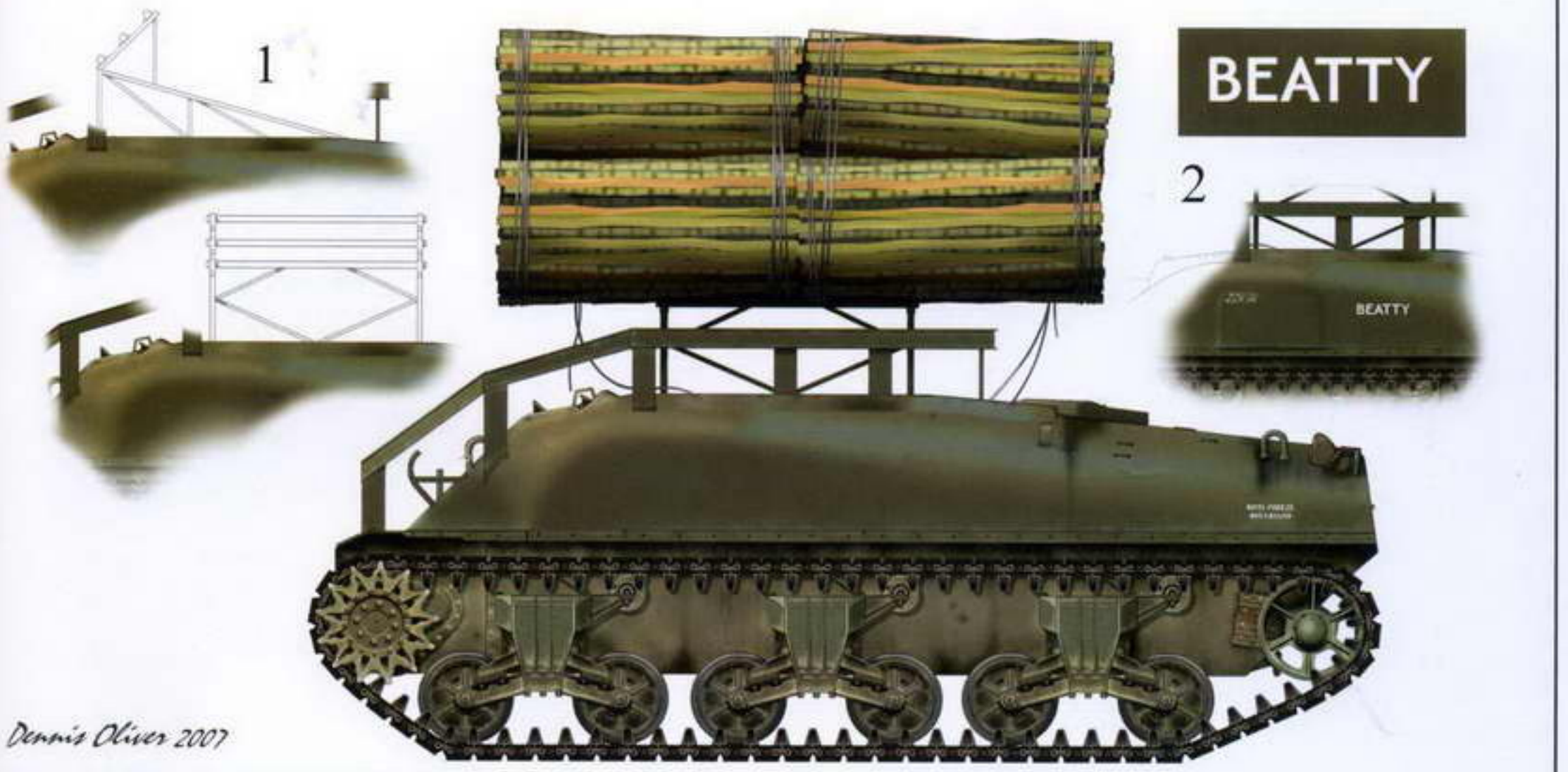
4th Hussar, Priest Kangaroo, April 1945

When the photograph on which this illustration is based was taken, the Hussars had some 56 Kangaroo Personnel Carriers based on the Priest chassis and another 52 based on the Sherman. Details such as extra armor plating and stowage bins varied almost from one vehicle to another, the conversions being carried out by Brigade Workshops. The wading trunk (1) is unusual but is based on a photograph of two converted vehicles – only one having the trunk. The A squadron marking (2) is in white but the significance of the numbers is unclear. Other vehicles are known to have carried the 9th Armoured Brigade formation badge and it is shown here (3).



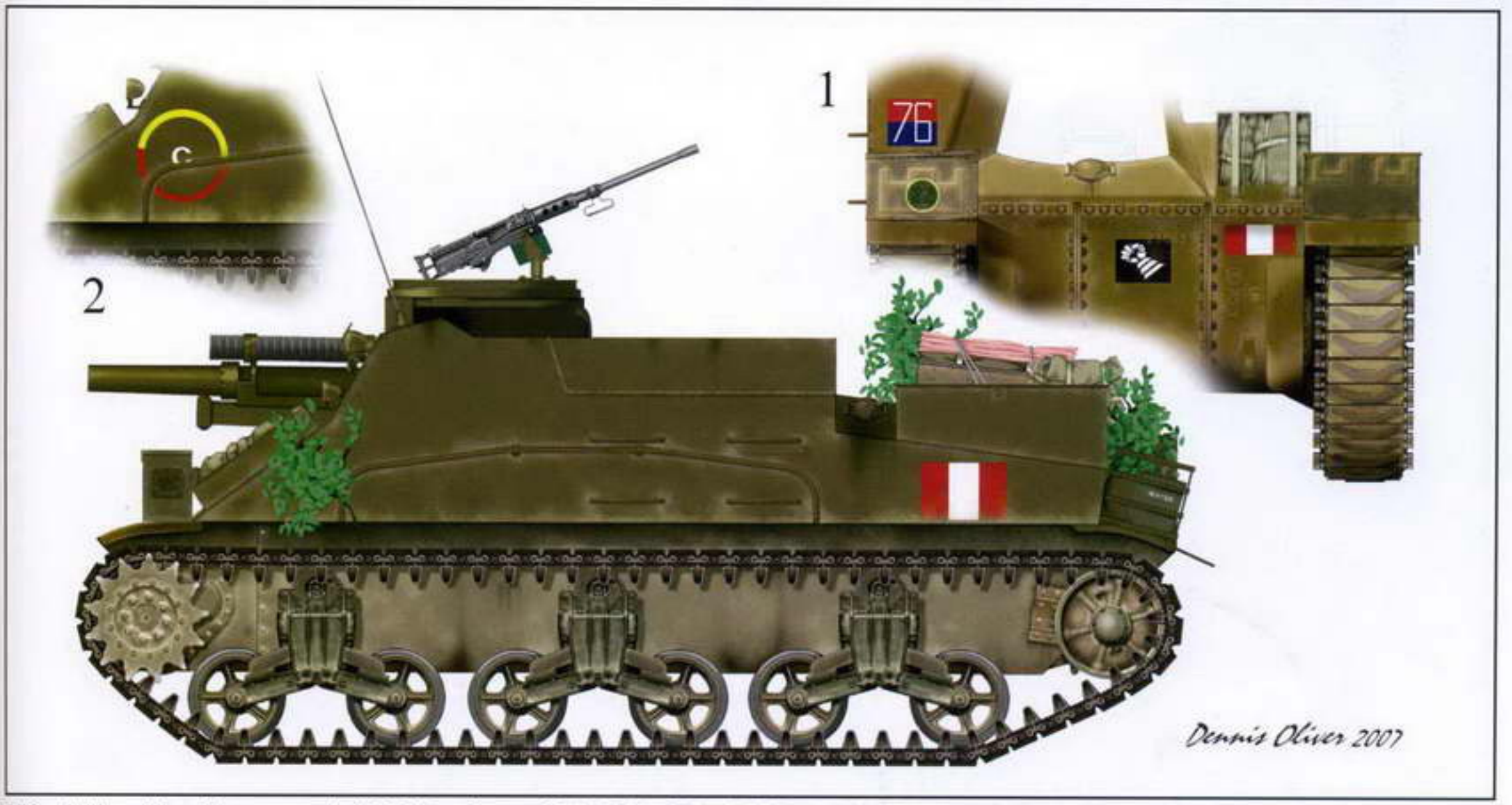
1st Armoured Engineer Regiment, Churchill AVRE, Spring 1945

This regiment, formed from 'A' Assault Regiment RAC/RE, was the senior of 25th Armoured Engineer Brigade and carried the C squadron sign in red on the turret side. On the hull front is the unit serial number of the senior regiment on a cobalt blue square and the brigade's formation badge (1). All AVREs in Italy were conversions of ex-tank brigade Churchills, the appliqué armor (2) being supplied as a conversion kit from the UK. The armor came pre-drilled to accept mountings for assault devices (for example CIRD). However during installation it was found the holes didn't line up with the bolts on the mounting brackets, and were thus useless. The dust covers over the side vents were a local modification.



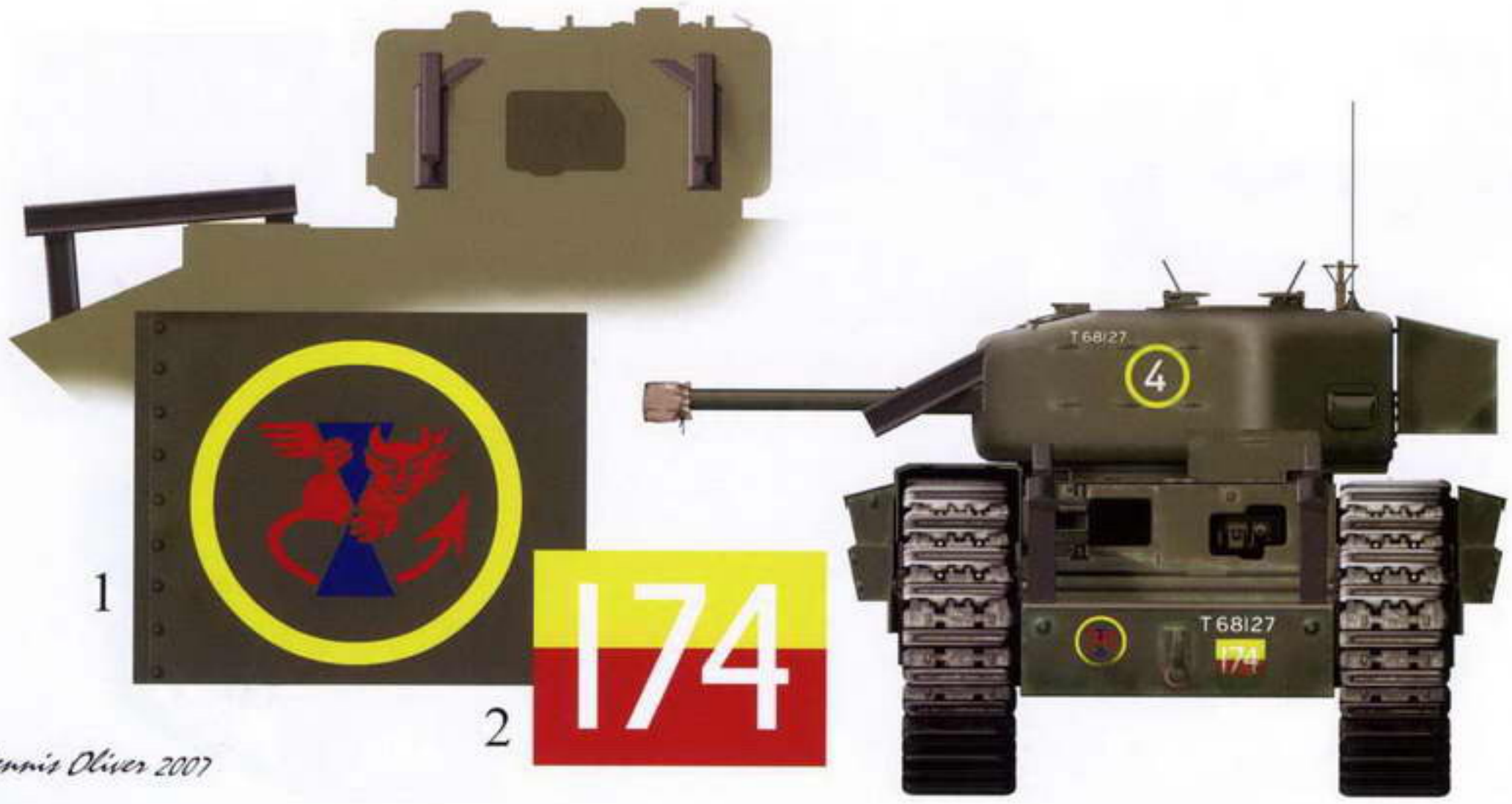
2nd Armoured Brigade, Sherman II Fascine Carrier, Spring 1945

One of the many conversions carried out on Sherman tanks by the workshops of 2nd Armoured Brigade, this late Sherman II retained its turret ring allowing the framework (1) to be rotated forward. The attached fascine or bolster could then be dropped onto the sturdy steel rails welded to the hull. The New Zealanders, who inherited these tanks, carried one fascine on the rails and another on the framework. This illustration is based on a photograph taken of 2nd Armoured Brigade's welders attaching the rails. The second tank in the photograph, an early Sherman II, carries the name BEATTY (2) painted in white on the hull side. It is doubtful that any formation badges were carried on these vehicles.



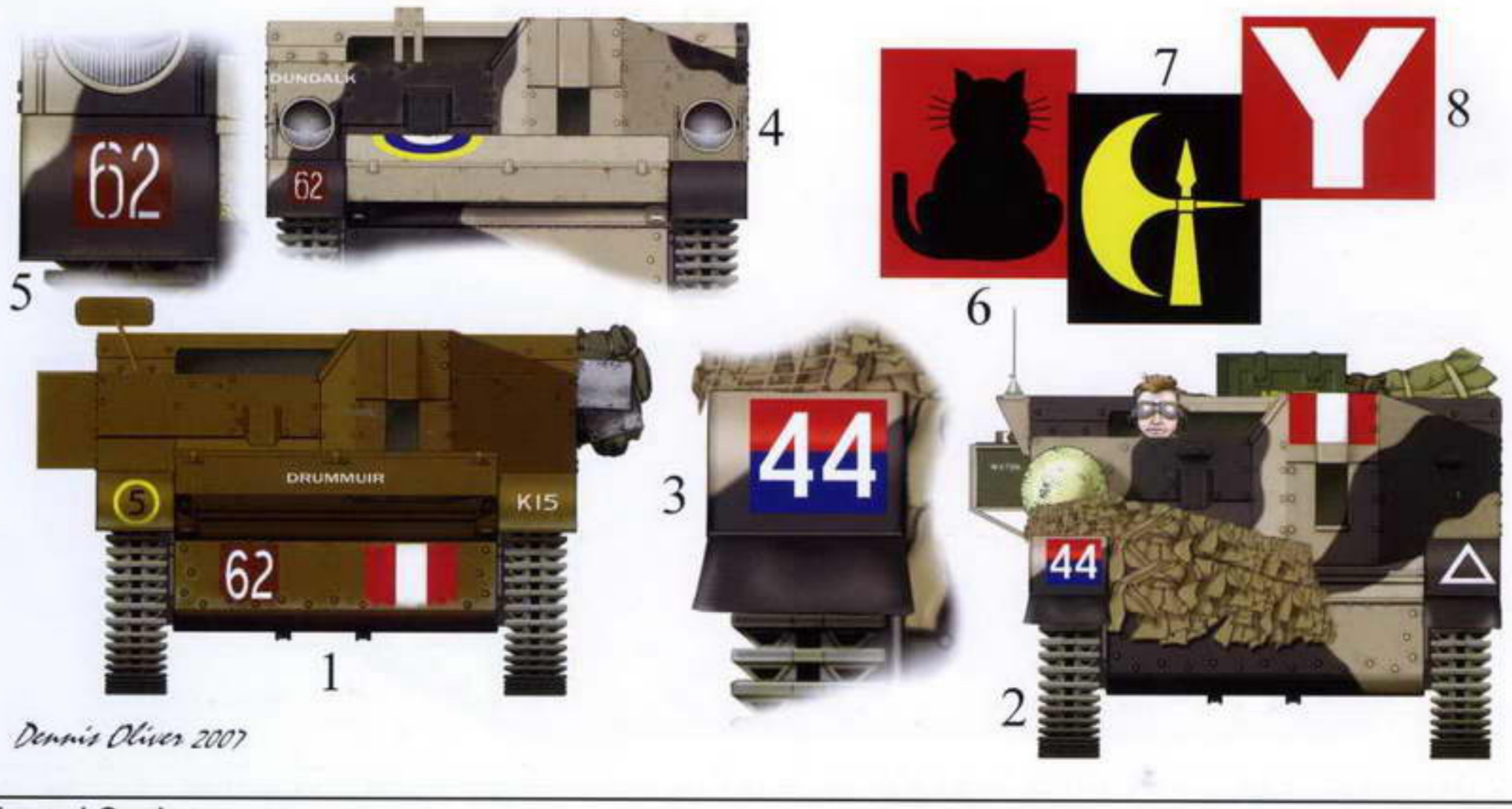
152nd (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment RA (TA), Priest 105mm Self Propelled Howitzer, May 1945

The identification of this vehicle is discussed further in the photograph section. This Priest is shown painted in SCC2 (Standard Camouflage Colour) in use prior to the adoption of Olive Drab in April 1944. Carried on the hull front (1) are the AoS sign of a white 76 on the red over blue square of the Artillery denoting the second field regiment of an armored division. Below that is a bridge classification marking while at the centre of the transmission housing is the 6th Armoured Division's "Mailed Fist". At top left is shown an unusual marking seen on at least one of the division's Priests (2) the significance of which is not fully understood although the batteries of this regiment were not numbered but referred to as A, B and C.



12th Royal Tank Regiment, Churchill IV, April 1945

An interesting conversion and one that shows that specialist vehicles were not restricted to the Engineers. Sections of railroad track have been welded to the hull of this Churchill IV to facilitate the carrying and delivery of a fascine. The rails are shown here as bare metal but they may have been painted. Also shown is 21st Tank Brigade's Formation Badge (1), a slightly different variant to that normally seen, and 12th RTR's colorful AoS sign of a white 174 on a yellow over red square (2).



Universal Carriers

No other vehicle typifies the British Army more than the carrier: (1) This carrier, seen coming ashore at Anzio, is probably from 1st Infantry Division. The AoS sign indicates a second senior regiment of a junior infantry brigade. It is painted in SCC2 Brown which was the standard color until the adoption of SCC 15 Olive Drab in April 1944; (2) A carrier AOP of 5th Infantry Division camouflaged in Light Mud and Black. The AoS sign (3) denotes the junior field artillery regiment of an infantry division; (4) A carrier of the London Irish Rifles of 168th Brigade, 56th Infantry Division. The AoS sign (5) is the same shown on 1 but in a slightly different style, and; Formation badges for (6) 56th Division, (7) 78th Division and (8) 5th Division.

Sherman tanks assemble for an attack during the assault on the Gustav Line at Cassino. The 6th Armoured Division history identifies this as 26th Armoured Brigade and the yellow squadron sign would indicate 2nd Lothians and Border Horse. The nearest vehicle, a Sherman III, appears to have the main gun, gun mantlet, part of the turret bustle and the front portion of the turret painted in a darker color. 15 May 1944. (IWM NA14891)

Sherman tanks advance during the assault on the Gustav Line at Cassino. Although no identifying marks are visible the style of markings and camouflage are similar to those seen on tanks of 6th Armoured Division – note the large 3 on the hull side. Just visible on the turret side is a very large A squadron sign. 15 May 1944. (IWM NA14889)

A Grant ARV (Armoured Recovery Vehicle) Mk I, missing the dummy gun, tows a disabled Sherman III during the assault on the Gustav Line. At this time most of the armored brigades in Italy had at least one of these vehicles. 16 May 1944. (IWM NA14940)

Ammunition is passed into the turret of a Churchill IV of 51st RTR, 25th Tank Brigade during operations in support of 1st Canadian Division. This was the first time Churchills had seen action in Italy. 17 May 1944. (IWM NA14974)

Churchill tank crews of HQ Squadron, 51st RTR of 25th Tank Brigade share out rations near their camouflaged vehicles before going into action in support of 1st Canadian Division. The AoS sign of a white 162 on a very dark brown square is visible on the hull front of the nearest tank. 17 May 1944. (IWM NA14976)

Churchill IV tanks of A Squadron 51st RTR move forward to support 1st Canadian Division. Barely visible on the gun muzzle cover is a piratical white skull and crossbones motif. 17 May 1944. (IWM NA14981)

This Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun has been variously identified as belonging to either 11th or 12th Royal Horse Artillery (Honourable Artillery Company), 6th Armoured Division. The identification of 6th Armoured Division is beyond doubt, however the Unit Serial Number 76 would indicate that this vehicle is from the second senior field artillery regiment, which in this case would be 152nd (Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA. This vehicle is shown and discussed in the illustration section. 17 May 1944. (IWM NA15052)

A dramatic shot of a Sherman tank advancing past a dug-in 17pdr anti-tank gun and crew near Cassino. Unfortunately no markings other than an A squadron sign enclosing a white number 1 are visible. Also of note is the unusually small blanket box. 17 May 1944. (IWM NA15075)

Sherman OP tank, possibly a Sherman I with reworked driver's and lap gunner's positions, attached to a regiment of Priest 105mm Self Propelled guns in Italy. The 8th Army Formation Badge is visible in front of the driver's hatch. 27 May 1944. (IWM N15573)

The crew of a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun of 24th Field Regiment, RA eat a meal beside their vehicle, christened ANZIO. The "two ducks swimming" badge, not surprisingly, identifies 22nd Battery. This vehicle displays features of both early models – the sand shield brackets, bogies and stowage box – with those of intermediate production such as the ammunition cover. 28 May 1944. (IWM NA15646)

Mortar carriers of 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers (Princess Victoria's) pass a wrecked German Nebelwerfer rocket launcher on their way to the front. At this time the Fusiliers were the second senior regiment of 38th Infantry Brigade of 78th Infantry Division. The AoS sign visible at the rear of the carrier however is that of the junior regiment of a senior infantry brigade. 28 May 1944. (IWM NA15654)

Major-General W R C Penny GOC 1st Division, under the flag of the Reconnaissance Corps, takes the salute during a march-past of 1st Reconnaissance Regiment led by a Humber armored car. The AoS sign of a white 41 on a green over blue square can be seen on the far mudguard as can the name OMNIPOTENT III towards the rear of the turret. The significance of the three-quarter circle sign shown on the turret and hull sides is not known. 23 June 1944. (IWM NA16356)

Sherman bulldozer in action. It is interesting to note that British Armoured Engineers considered the diesel powered Sherman III as the most suitable tank for conversion using the dozer kit. The Sherman V, favored by the REME due to its stronger clutch, equipped the armored regiments. The British considered the radial engine models as unsuitable for dozing and regarded American M4A1 dozers on loan as 'mechanically useless'. The Steel Chevron track was also preferred for a Sherman Dozer. The M1 Dozer blade shown in this photo is missing part of the armored cover. 24 June 1944. (IWM NA16394)

A Sherman III firing in support of an attack by 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers on enemy positions north of Badia. Although no identifying markings are visible the tank name – unfortunately indecipherable - carried on the hull side, the manner of squadron sign and the style of camouflage are consistent with the regiments of 9th Armoured Brigade which arrived in Italy at about this time. The antenna at the front may indicate that this is a command tank. A pintle mount for a .30 cal MG can also be seen on the commander's cupola. 28 June 1944. (IWM NA16478)

A 75mm gun being salvaged from a knocked-out Sherman tank at 26th Armoured Brigade workshops in Perugia. Note the very large squadron sign which seems to have been a feature of this brigade's Shermans. The official caption reads: "The entry point for an 88mm shell can be seen on the side of the tank's hull". This tank displays several early features including the tabs used to mount the sand shields and bolt holes on the sides of the gun mantlet. 30 June 1944. (IWM NA16518)

Infantry move up past a Daimler Scout Car during the advance of 78th Division. The division's Formation Badge can be seen on the left hand side rear mudguard. 30 June 1944. (IWM NA16556)

A Sherman III of 6th Armoured Division, possibly of 2nd Lothians and Border Horse from the cap badge, moving up towards Castiglione. Applied camouflage, seen here in the form of scrim netting, was popular with armored units in Italy. The appliqué armor in front of the driver's hood is unusual as is the step at the centre of the transmission cover. 4 July 1944. (IWM NA16638)

Sherman tank, probably a III, of B Squadron, 3rd King's Own Hussars, 9th Armoured Brigade, in Italy. This tank retains the Light Mud and Black/Dark Green camouflage applied to the Brigade's tanks in Syria in late 1943. Also still visible, although much faded and indecipherable, are the remnants of a name painted in large red letters on the hull side. Barely visible on the turret side is a B squadron sign enclosing a 1, presumably the troop number. 7 July 1944. (IWM NA16755)

The crew of a Staghound armored car of the 1st King's Dragoon Guards shelter from the sun beneath a parasol fitted to the turret of their vehicle. To complete the holiday atmosphere the name FRASCATI, a popular tourist resort near Rome, has been chalked onto the turret. 13 July 1944. (IWM NA16801)

Italian partisans, armed with a mixture of German and British weapons, clamber aboard a turretless Stuart Recce tank as the 8th Army enters Arezzo. The Formation Badge of 6th Armoured Division can be seen on the right mudguard. The Union Jack looks to have been locally manufactured.16 July 1944. (IWM NA16887)

Taken from the same sequence as NA16887, this Stuart Recce tank carries no identifiable markings but the cap badge on the commander's beret does seem to be that of the 2nd Lothians and Border Horse. A Sherman follows at a distance. 16 July 1944. (IWM NA16939)

Sherman tank of 16th/5th Lancers, 26th Armoured Brigade, 6th Armoured Division in Arezzo, Italy. These markings are often identified as belonging to a Canadian regiment, however the 1st Armoured Division's shoulder patch as worn by the commander is quite unmistakable. 16 July 1944. (IWM NA16963)

Troops visiting the scene of the Anzio fighting inspect the rusting remains of a Universal Carrier of 1st London Rifles. This vehicle is also shown in the illustration section. 19 July 1944. (IWM NA17009)

A new Churchill IV being unloaded from a transporter at Arezzo. Unfortunately no markings enabling identification are visible on the Churchill but, and surely unrelated, the lorry in the background carries the Formation Badge of 6th Armoured Division. 19 July 1944. (IWM NA17040)

Heavily camouflaged Churchill tanks of the North Irish Horse, 25th Tank Brigade. The tank nearest the camera is an NA 75 conversion which utilized the 75mm gun and mantlet from disabled Shermans - letters NA standing for North Africa where the conversions were completed. At the end of 1944, before their transfer to 21st Tank Brigade, the regiment had 18 of these conversions on hand. 19 July 1944. (IWM NA17041)

Churchill IV of the North Irish Horse, the turret covered in scrim netting camouflage, leaves the road during the advance towards Florence. 23 July 1944. (IWM NA17144)

A Sherman tank advancing through Imprunetta near Florence. The use of foliage as camouflage was much more widespread among armored units in Italy than in Northern Europe. The history of the Royal Scots Greys explains that the countryside was covered with small orchards and olive groves providing ideal cover for German anti-tank gunners but at the same time severely restricting the view of the tank commander. Any additional cover, even that offered by a few branches, was seen as beneficial. 3 August 1944. (IWM NA17565).

The April 1943 camouflage of a Light Mud base with Black/Dark Green disruptive pattern could be seen in Italy well into 1944. These markings however look to have been applied much more recently. This Sherman carries the name PAT. in white, or a very bright yellow, with black drop-shading falling towards the rear. Behind the name is a C squadron circle enclosing a letter X which, taken with the commander's and driver's Khaki berets, may indicate that this tank is attached to an artillery unit. Imprunetta, Italy. 3 August 1944. (IWM NA17567)

A turretless Stuart Recce tank towing a bulldozer which became bogged while repairing a hole blown in the road by the retreating Germans. Stuart tanks with their turrets removed had been used in a reconnaissance role in the Western Desert but in late 1943 their use became formalized when the regiments of armored brigades had light tanks added to their organization. These conversions were now standardized with alterations to the interior, revised stowage arrangements and the addition of a .50 cal machine gun. 12 August 1944. (IWM NA17794)

An M10 3 inch Self Propelled gun of 72nd Anti-Tank Regiment, 6th Armoured Division. This vehicle is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 12 August 1944. (IWM NA17797)

M10 3 inch Self Propelled guns parked in the Via Andrea Del Sarto in Florence. The lack of any unit identifying markings was a common feature of armored vehicles in Italy, particularly late in the war. These M10s are probably in their original color of US Army Olive Drab. The vehicle at the back has the later "Duck bill" counterweights on the turret rear. 13 August 1944. (IWM NA17780)

M10s of A Troop, 111th Battery, 72nd Anti-Tank Regiment, 6th Armoured Division, in the Arno valley near Florence. Note the tubes welded to the hull fronts used to support an attachment for camouflaged netting. 11-14 August 1944. (IWM NA17868)

These heavily camouflaged tanks of 51st RTR are often described as Churchill IVs moving forward near Isola Del Piano in support of 138th Brigade during the advance on the Gothic Line. In fact the lead tank, at least, is an elderly Churchill I – note the 3 inch howitzer mounted in the nose. Just visible on the stowage bin on the left of the turret is a HQ squadron sign. 27-28 August 1944. (IWM NA18088)

An M10 of 93rd Anti-Tank Regiment, RA passes infantry of the 5th Sherwood Foresters during the advance to the Gothic Line. This regiment was formed from 6th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in November 1941 and served in Italy as 8th Army troops. 27-28 August 1944. (IWM NA18091)

A Sherman I and two Sherman Hybrid I tanks supporting infantry of 2/5th Leicestershire Regiment, 46th Division, near Coldazzo on the Gothic Line. All tanks wear yellow A squadron signs on their turret sides. The nearest is named ADMIRAL, applied in a dark color – possibly black - and the middle tank has the name ANARCHIST painted on the hull side in yellow, behind the appliqué armor. None have pistol ports. 30 August 1944. (IWM NA18124)

Churchill tanks of 51st RTR lined up below a crest near the River Foglia. The tanks were supporting infantry of 139th Brigade attacking across the river. The nearest tank, ACHILLES, is shown and discussed in the illustration section. 30 August 1944. (IWM NA18129)

A Churchill IV, possibly of 51st RTR, moves up during the assault on the Gothic Line. 31 August 1944. (IWM NA18151)

A Sherman III passes a Churchill, probably a IV, carrying infantry during 46th Infantry Division's assault on the Gothic Line. The only visible markings are the B squadron sign on the Sherman turret forward of the open pistol port and the Churchill's WD Number, T172303B, painted below the rolled tarp. 2 September 1944. (IWM NA18166)

Churchill ARK Mk II (Italian Pattern) bridging tank on the Gothic Line. The term Italian Pattern is something of a misnomer as ARKs were only used operationally in Italy. A simple yet effective idea, the ARK worked by driving the tank into a ditch or stream and lowering the treadway sections at either end of the vehicle. The following tanks simply drove over the resulting bridge formed by the treadways and the Churchills tracks. 3 September 1944. (IWM NA18327)

A Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun crew is given directions during the German retreat from the Gothic Line. This vehicle shows features of early production models such as the symmetrical track skids and the suspension arms without holes. In the background can be seen a Bedford 15 cwt lorry and an M10. 3 September 1944. (IWM NA18341)

A Churchill NA 75 tank of 25th Tank Brigade passes through the narrow streets of Montefiore. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 11 September 1944. (IWM NA18530)

A Stuart Recce tank of the 2nd Lothians and Border Horse, the junior regiment of 26th Armoured Brigade, 6th Armoured Division, follows a Sherman III OP of the division's second senior field artillery regiment. 12 September 1944. (IWM NA18585)

Two Sherman tanks of 6th RTR in action against German machine-gun positions on the walls of San Marino. The name FALKIRK can be seen above the appliqué armor on the hull side. The tanks would seem to have been numbered sequentially throughout the regiment and an A squadron sign is also visible. The series of small dots, squares and crosses on the hull side forward of the name and number were used to boresight the gun in the field. 19 September 1944. (IWM NA18734)

Sherman tanks, mostly IIIs, of 26th Armoured Brigade, 6th Armoured Division, lined up on the road north of San Benedetto, in preparation for the final push to Forli. From the cap badge worn by the man in the foreground this may be 2nd Lothians and Border Horse. Note that not all these tanks have appliqué armor. 27 September 1944. (IWM NA19037)

A Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun of 6th Armoured Division near the top of the Muraglione Pass between San Godenzo and San Benedetto. This vehicle is discussed further in the illustration section. Of special note is the Signals AoS sign on the mudguard of the motorcycle at right. 27 September 1944. (IWM NA19040)

The three Humber armored cars of 8th Army Tactical HQ's Defence Company. All are painted in a two-color disruptive camouflage pattern. 27 September 1944. (IWM NA19104)

General Montgomery's command tank, an elderly Grant. This vehicle had been with 8th Army HQ since El Alamein and was originally painted in a base coat of Light Stone 61 - a medium yellow sand color - with a disruptive pattern of Dark Olive Green. Colored photographs of Montgomery's staff car would suggest that this scheme may have been retained in Italy. Note the very worn T48 tracks. 27 September 1944. (IWM NA19106)

An M10 17pdr Self Propelled gun – Achilles was probably a name applied post war - of 93rd Anti-Tank Regiment crossing the River Savio on a Churchill ARK. This tank is shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 24 October 1944. (IWM NA19727)

A heavily camouflaged M10 17pdr crossing the River Savio on a Churchill ARK. The method of using the top run of the Churchill's tracks as part of the "bridge" can be clearly seen here. 24 October 1944. (IWM NA19759)

A Churchill IV and infantry advance after crossing the River Savio. 24 October 1944. (IWM NA19757)

Priest 105mm Self Propelled guns of 98th Field Regiment, RA. The AoS sign and battery tactical marking can be seen painted onto the ammunition case in the foreground. 25 October 1944. (IWM NA19775)

Churchill AVREs (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) carrying fascines and Churchill ARKs passing through Forli. 9 November 1944. (IWM NA19999)

Churchill ARK bridgelaying tanks passing through Forli. The steel treadways and the method of raising and lowering them can be clearly seen in this photograph. Note the white striping painted on the treadways. 9 November 1944. (IWM NA20000)

A Sherman IIA of The Queen's Bays, 2nd Armoured Brigade crossing the River Rabbi at San Martino. On the rear hull, behind the baggage and camouflage, the white 40 on a red square of the senior regiment and 1st Armoured Division's famous charging Rhino Formation Badge can just be seen. The system of Roman numerals and letters can also be seen on the tanks of the other regiments of this brigade. The markings of this regiment are shown and discussed further in the illustration section. 9 November 1944. (IWM NA20043)

The official caption reads: An amusing message chalked on the side of an M3 half-track mounting a 75mm gun of the King's Dragoon Guards, operating as part of Porter Force on the Adriatic coast near Ravenna. 1 December 1944. (IWM NA20341)

Sexton II 25pdr Self Propelled gun of 1st Royal Horse Artillery, RA operating as part of Porter Force on the Adriatic coast near Ravenna. The checkerboard marking on the hull side was worn by all 1st RHA vehicles. Of note are the Canadian Dry Pin tracks. 1 December 1944. (IWM NA20334)

M3 half-tracks mounting 75mm guns of the King's Dragoon Guards, operating as part of Porter Force on the Adriatic coast near Ravenna. The red/white/red recognition sign on the hull side has been painted over a five-pointed star. The Guards managed to retain some of these vehicles until 1945. 1 December 1944. (IWM NA20339)

Churchill AVRE with fascine. This tank is probably from the Assault Regiment RAC/RE. 19 December 1944. (IWM NA20861)

Self Propelled 75mm guns on M3 half-tracks of 27th Lancers, north-west of Mezzano. These vehicles retain their base coat of US Army Olive Drab, which was quite dark when new but quickly faded. Just visible is the US registration number in Blue Drab. Note the difference in the wheel rims between the original, nearest the camera, and the combat rims at centre. 18 February 1945. (IWM NA22386)

Taken from the same sequence as the previous photograph. The white, five-pointed star enclosed in a circle was the regulation aerial recognition marking from early 1944 but is not often seen on British vehicles in Italy. The name ACORN INN is also in white with a red A squadron marking in front of the side door. Independent armored regiments, several of which operated in Italy, seem to have used red to depict their squadron signs. 18 February 1945. (IWM NA22387)

A Churchill VII tank of C Squadron, North Irish Horse carrying Italian infantry of 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry (Italian), north of Castel Borsetti. At this time the North Irish Horse formed part of 21st Tank Brigade and had only three of these tanks on hand. 2 March 1945. (IWM NA22739)

Churchill AVRE of C Squadron, 1st Armoured Engineer Regiment of 25th Armoured Engineer Brigade photographed in about March 1945. This vehicle is discussed further in the illustration section. (Photo Courtesy Pete Andrews)

Men of A Company, 1st Battalion of the Jewish Brigade ride on a Churchill tank, possibly of the North Irish Horse, in the Alfonsini-Mezzano sector. 14 March 1945. (IWM NA23041)

Churchill tanks of the North Irish Horse laying down indirect fire on German positions, Alfonsini-Mezzano sector. The tank second from the camera is a Mark VII with an early shaped turret but later commander's cupola. Note the tubes welded to the turrets of the NA 75s. 21 March 1945. (IWM NA23276)

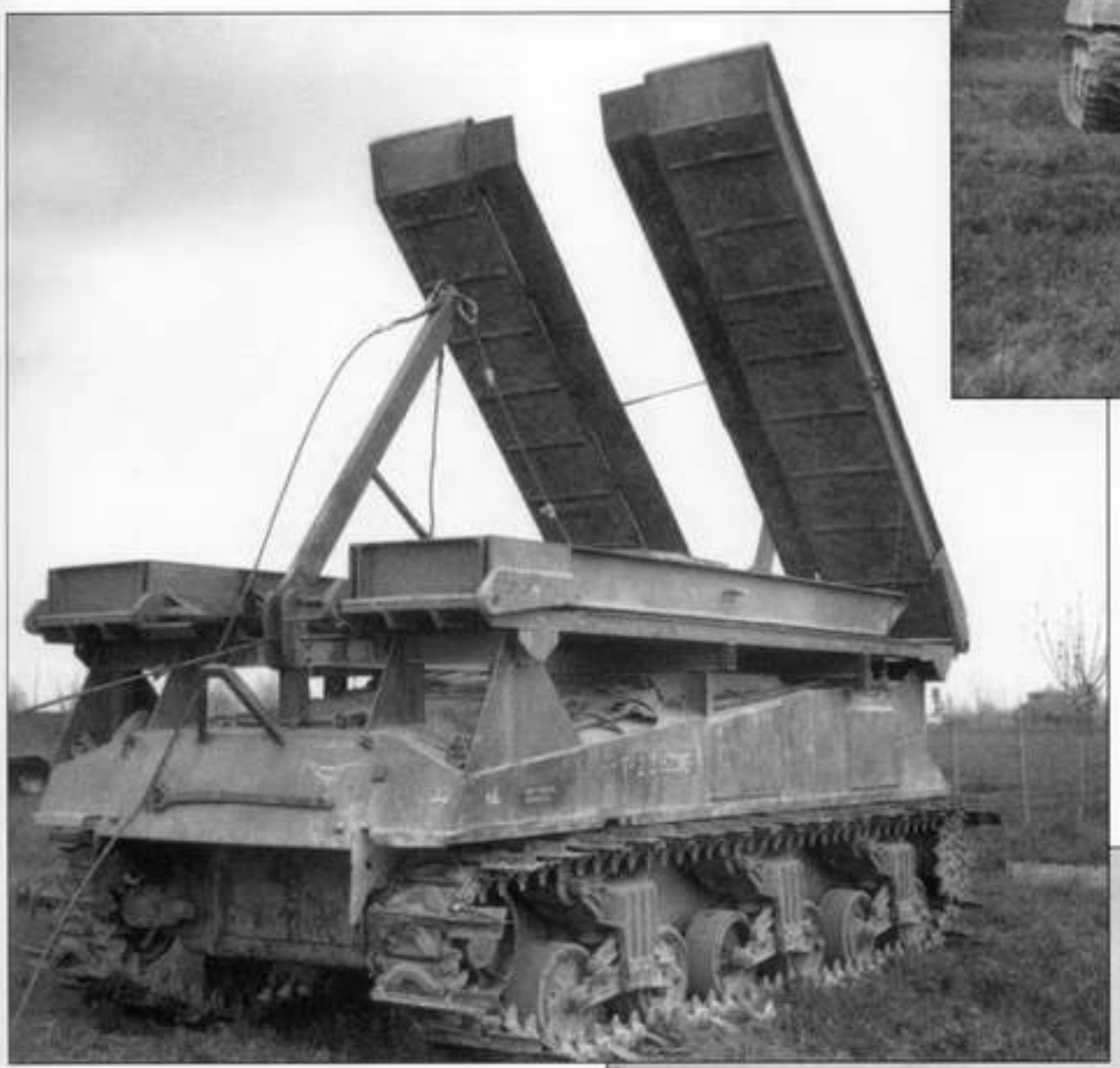
Taken from the same sequence as NA23276, Churchill NA 75 tanks of the North Irish Horse lay down indirect fire on enemy positions in the Alfonsini-Mezzano sector. 21 March 1945. (IWM NA23277)

A Churchill ARV recovers a Churchill IV of the North Irish Horse from a steep bank, in the Alfonsini sector near Mezzano. Although no markings are visible on the gun tank a former member of the regiment, Gerry Chester, has identified it as CASTLEROBIN IV of C Squadron. 21 March 1945. (IWM NA23278)

A Churchill bridgelayer of 51st Royal Tank Regiment in action during a demonstration in the Mezzano area. At this time 51st RTR was part of 25th Armoured Engineer Brigade. 30 March 1945. (IWM NA23555)

A Churchill tank of C Squadron, North Irish Horse, drives over a bridge laid by a Churchill bridgelayer of 51st Royal Tank Regiment during a demonstration in the Mezzano area. 30 March 1945. (IWM NA23556)

Sherman Twaby ARK bridging vehicle with ramps in traveling position. Based on the Sherman V, four of these conversions were completed in the spring of 1945. The essential difference between these vehicles and the Churchill ARK was that the treadways were now carried flat on the deck. They did however require the assistance of a second vehicle to place the ramps into the launch position, in this case a Sherman IIA. 4 April 1945. (IWM NA23760)



A rear view of the vehicle shown in the NA23760 showing the cables used to raise the treadways leading to the second tank. Also of note are the Platypus grousers, attached to the T48 tracks. Despite their popularity with the troops they suffered from several drawbacks, not the least of which was the wait of up to 8 hours while they were attached or removed. 4 April 1945. (IWM NA23763)

Churchill tanks advance along the Faenza-Russi road. 8 April 1945. (IWM NA23788)

A fascine is loaded onto a Churchill AVRE from a lorry near the River Senio. A very good shot showing the method of carrying the fascine and the cables used to release it. Note that the ramp is constructed of timber and could be jettisoned together with the fascine to allow the turret to rotate. 8 April 1945. (IWM NA23796)

Churchill Crocodile flamethrower tank supporting infantry of 2nd (New Zealand) Division during the assault across the River Senio. At this time most of the available Crocodiles were concentrated in 51st RTR of 25th Armoured Engineer Brigade - although 21st Tank Brigade managed to retain 12 Crocodiles despite the disapproval of higher authority. 9 April 1945. (IWM NA23837)

A Churchill tank of the North Irish Horse crossing the River Senio over two Churchill ARK tanks. The effectiveness of the ARK design is amply illustrated here – the construction of a bridge to gap this obstacle would have taken many hours. 10 April 1945. (IWM NA23920)

Taken from the same sequence as the previous photograph, a Priest 105mm Self Propelled gun crossing the bridge formed by two Churchill ARKs. At the front of the hull can be seen the name ENDURANCE probably in white. The hinged armor over the ammunition stowage identifies this as a mid-production vehicle. The reader should be aware that this vehicle has been previously identified, incorrectly, as a Sexton. 10 April 1945. (IWM NA23921)

'Fantails' or Buffalo amphibians transport German prisoners through a flooded landscape south of Lake Comacchio. These vehicles were operated by an ad hoc unit - formed from RASC and American personnel - under the nominal control of 9th Armoured Brigade. 11 April 1945. (IWM NA23992)

Churchill Crocodile flamethrower tanks move forward near Imola. The Crocodile was based on the Churchill VII, itself a major re-design, and had the hull machine gun replaced with a flamethrower. The fuel was carried in an armored trailer, as seen here, which held 400 gallons of fuel and the nitrogen propellant. The trailer was connected to the tank by an articulated coupling. The flamethrower was capable of projecting several one second bursts over 150 yards. Once the fuel was exhausted the tank could still use the main gun. 12 April 1945. (IWM NA24019)

Despite the extensive camouflage this tank can be identified as a Sherman Hybrid IC, the 17pdr armed version of the Sherman Hybrid I, the "C" suffix identifying the armament. The white camouflage on the main gun, commonly used to disguise 17pdr's in Northern Europe, is rarely seen in Italy. Note that the tracks have alternating standard and Platypus grousers. This is the River Santerno near Imola. 12 April 1945. (IWM NA24026)

A Priest Kangaroo personnel carrier transports infantry of 78th Division near Conselice. Although identified in the original caption as 209th Self Propelled Battery, Royal Artillery, the available Priest Kangaroos were concentrated in 4th Queen's Own Hussars and 14th/20th Hussars. Photographs from the same sequence clearly show the crews wearing RAC berets and the badge of 4th Hussars. Note that the hinged ammunition stowage cover has been welded shut and the use of extended end connectors. These vehicles are also shown in the illustration section. 13 April 1945. (IWM NA24043)

Churchill tanks are filmed by an AFPU cameraman during the advance of 56th Division north-east of Argenta. 17 April 1945. (IWM NA24288)

Churchill tanks of 21st Tank Brigade cross a bridge over the River Reno. The Royal Tank Regiment cap badges worn by the crew would seem to indicate that this Churchill IV is from 48th RTR. 18 April 1945. (IWM NA24305)

Humber Light Reconnaissance Cars of 56th Recce Regiment in Argenta. This regiment was attached to 78th Infantry Division and fought in Italy from the Sicily landings until the war's end. In 1944 they were partially re-equipped with Greyhound armored cars. 18 April 1945. (IWMNA 24311)

A Churchill VII of 21st Tank Brigade, probably 48th RTR, passes a Churchill AVRE after crossing the River Reno close to the destroyed railway bridge near Bastia. 18 April 1945. (IWM NA24306)

Stretcher bearers pass Sherman tanks in Portomaggiore. At this late stage of the war features of the early models of Sherman tanks, such as the gun mantlet and bolted transmission cover, are still commonly seen. Of special interest however is the use of what are either T47E1 Composite or the very similar T56 Steel track – both rarely photographed. 19 April 1945. (IWM NA24246)

Three Churchill VIIs pass Sherman tanks and carriers in the main square of Portomaggiore. Most of the available Mk VIIs at this time, other than the Crocodiles, were held by 21st Tank Brigade and 7th Armoured Brigade, who after a period training with DD tanks were being re-equipped as a Churchill unit. 20 April 1945. (IWM NA24367)

Men of the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers are carried forward on Sherman tanks near Ferrara. The lead tank is a Sherman IB armed with the 105mm Howitzer. Just visible behind the right foot of the infantryman sitting next to the main gun is what appears to be an AoS sign beginning with the number 4 followed by an 0. Most of these vehicles were attached to HQ units and used as close-support weapons and this tank may therefore belong to a division HQ. The number of aerials would also seem to indicate that this is a command tank. Note the use of M3 Grease Guns by the accompanying infantry. 22 April 1945. (IWM NA24365)

A Churchill NA 75 of the North Irish Horse halts near infantry of the 1st London Irish Rifles near Tanara during the advance to the River Po. The Unit Serial Number 173 is visible on the hull front. 23 April 1945. (IWM NA24460)

A Buffalo amphibian or 'Fantail' loaded with supplies heads out across the River Po. This version of the LVT (Landing Vehicle Tracked) had the engine moved forward and a ramp installed at the rear. It was by far the most numerously produced version and was referred to by the British as the Buffalo IV. 26 April 1945. (IWM NA24598)

A Sherman V AOP drives off a raft after crossing the River Adige. Interestingly this tank carries the Formation Badge of 9th Armoured Brigade, an independent formation, visible just below the driver. Under that can be seen the AoS sign of the senior Field Artillery regiment of an armored division – a white number 74 on a red over blue square. In Italy the system of authorized markings seem to have been applied in a manner deemed appropriate at the time. 29 April 1945. (IWM NA24711)

A Churchill tank of 21st Tank Brigade comes ashore after crossing the River Adige, watched by the inhabitants of the village of Cabiance. This vehicle is also shown in the illustration section. 29 April 1945. (IWM NA24738)

With the war almost at an end, infantrymen ride on Sherman tanks, probably IIIs, of 6th Armoured Division towards the Austrian border. Of note are the field modifications including the basket welded to the rear hull and the extension to the exhaust deflector. Unusually the red/white/red recognition sign has been painted on the left side of the rear hull plate. 4 May 1945. (IWM NA24933)

A DD (Duplex Drive) Sherman III of B Squadron, 7th Queen's Own Hussars photographed in the Piazzale Roma in Venice when the brigade entered the town. The Formation Badge of 9th Armoured Brigade is carried here, unusually but logically, on the turret side. Above that can be seen the notation CAMOUFLAGE NET in small white letters. Just visible on the turret roof, under a thick coating of dust and mud, is a five-pointed white star enclosed in a circle. The WD Number, also painted on the hull, is clearly visible. The large Union Jack adds a touch of color. 30 April 1945. (IWM NA24683)

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